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BY JOHN HEUSSENSTAMM & CHAD JOHNSON



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LESSON #1:

ANATOMY OF THE TURNAROUND

If there's one thing that almost every 12-bar blues song has, it's the turnaround. There are almost limitless variations on this little calling card of the blues, though, which has made it a bit elusive in terms of theoretical study. In this lesson, we'll look at the anatomy of the turnaround in hopes of gaining a better understanding of what it does, why, and how.

Its Sole Purpose

The turnaround occurs in measures 11–12 of a 12-bar blues, and has one sole purpose: to set up another 12-bar chorus of blues. In its simplest incarnation, it moves from the I chord to the V chord. In the key of G, for instance, this would mean moving from G (or G7) to D (or D7).

TRACK 1
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 114 (♩ = ♩)

(I) G7 (IV) C7 (I) G7 (IV) C7

(I) G7 (V) D7 (IV) C7 (I) G7 (V) D7

Turnaround

That's the basic idea. But as we'll soon see, there are dozens of ways to get from A to B.

Slow Blues Variation

In a slow blues, the turnaround is usually a bit different. It often moves from I to IV in measure 11 and then I to V in measure 12, with each of those chords receiving two beats (or six 8th-note beats in 12/8). Here's an example of this in C.

TRACK 1
0:30

CD 1 ♩ = 56

(V) G7 (IV) F7 (I) C7 (IV) F7 (I) C7 (V) G7

9 10 11 12

Chromatic Variations

This is when the variations start piling up. In the classic blues shuffle, the turnaround often involves chromatic motion when moving to the V chord. This can be played on guitar, on bass, or on both. There are generally two basic categories: ascending chromatic motion and descending chromatic motion. Interestingly, descending is much more popular on the guitar, while ascending is probably more popular on bass. We'll focus on the former in this lesson.

When chromatic motion is used, it begins on beat 2 of measure 11. The first beat is simply the I chord. Beginning on beat 2, there's a line that moves ♭7–6–♭6, with each getting one beat. This continues down one more half step to the 5th on the downbeat of measure 12. Interestingly though, this is normally not the arrival of the V chord; it's usually the I chord with the 5th in the bass.

This is followed with more chromatic motion, usually, approaching the root of the V chord again, for real this time. The V chord then usually hits on the "and" of beat 2 in measure 12. Let's check out the following basic idea in E using the open high E string on top and a descending line starting from the E on string 4. This is a very stripped down turnaround.

LESSON #2

TURNAROUNDS IN THE KEY OF E

TRACK 1

0:57

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 116$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$)

B7 A7 E E7 E°7 Am/C E/B B7 E

The descending chromatic line doesn't always appear in the lower register, and it usually doesn't move by itself. It's often joined by a line that starts on the 5th (again, on beat 2 of measure 11) and harmonizes with the line that starts on the 7th. This line moves 5→4 (or #4)–4–3. This also allows us to assign chord names to these passing harmonies, which are quite colorful as you can see. Here is one way this idea might appear in an E blues.

TRACK 1

1:10

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 100$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$)

E E7 E°7 Am E B7

In yet another variation on this idea, we sometimes add the tonic pedal tone on guitar, which is quite easy to do in the key of E. Here's an example of that idea.

TRACK 1

1:19

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 90$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$)

E E7 E°7 Am E B7

Instead of the ♭7–6→6–5 line, you sometimes see a line that moves 3→♭3–2–1 along with the 5→4–3 line. Here's what that sounds like in E.

TRACK 1

1:30

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 94$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$)

E E°7 Am6 E B7

OPEN-POSITION TURNAROUNDS IN THE KEY OF E

Where It Goes

Figure 1 consists of two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Meas.: 1' and contains measures 1 through 5. Above the staff, the chord symbols I, IV, I, and IV are placed over measures 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. The bottom staff is labeled '7' and contains measures 7 through 12. Above the staff, the chord symbols I, V, IV, I, V, and I are placed over measures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 respectively. A bracket labeled 'Turnaround' spans measures 11 and 12. The text 'etc.' appears at the end of the bottom staff.

Now that we know where to use them, let's get to the licks.

This first one makes use of chromatically descending 6ths on strings 1 and 3 and is one of the most famous of all.



♩ = 94 (♩♩ = ♩♩♩)

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Wind" by The Beatles. It includes a guitar part in E major (4/4 time) and a bass part. The guitar part features a melodic line with triplets and a "let ring" instruction. The bass part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a similar triplet pattern. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4.

Guitar Part:

- Chords: E, E⁷, Am⁶, E, B⁷
- Tempo: 120
- Time Signature: 4/4
- Key Signature: One sharp (F#)
- Notes: The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with triplets indicated by a '3' and a bracket.
- Instructions: "let ring" is written above the final measure of the first system.

Bass Part:

- Notes: The bass line follows a similar triplet pattern as the guitar, using eighth and quarter notes.

Here's another take in the same register that puts descending 3rds against the open high E string.



$\text{♩} = 80$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

[illegible]

LICK 3

In this variation on the previous example, we don't use the chromatic descent, but a blues lick instead. This type of idea was a favorite of Stevie Ray Vaughan's.

TRACK 2

0:23

CD 1 ♩ = 80 (♩ = ♩)

LICK 4

In this turnaround, we see more descending 6ths, this time on strings 5 and 3. We're arpeggiating up through the 6ths and using the open high E string on top each time.

TRACK 2

0:35

CD 1 ♩ = 70 (♩ = ♩)

Variations

One very important thing to remember is that each one of these turnarounds can yield many more by employing a slight variation. For example, take the notes of one and the rhythmic approach of the other—or vice versa. For instance, we could use the notes from Lick 2 but with the arpeggiation idea of Lick 4 to get this idea.

TRACK 2

0:48

CD 1 ♩ = 90 (♩ = ♩)

Or notice that each one approaches the walk up to the root of the V chord (B in this case) a little differently. You can mix and match those endings with other beginnings and so on. Before you know it, four turnaround licks will turn into dozens! Have fun with these ideas, and keep adding to your turnaround repertoire.

LESSON #3:

OPEN-POSITION TURNAROUNDS IN THE KEY OF G

You can never know too many good turnaround licks. Besides lending a professional sound to you and your band, they're great for clearly marking the sections of a blues song, including the intro, verse, solo, and outro. That's why it's good to be armed with as many as possible. In this lesson, we'll concentrate on open-position turnarounds in the key of G.

Where It Goes

Turnaround licks are most often used in the 12-bar format, in which they appear in the last two measures—11 and 12—and they generally move from the I chord to the V chord. This usually sets up a return to the top of the form. (They can also be used to end the song, in which case the ending would be changed to resolve on the I instead of the V.) Most often, they make use of chromatic motion to do this. Here's a chord chart of a 12-bar blues illustrating the placement of the turnaround.

Licks

Now that we know where to place them, let's get to the licks.

LICK 1

This first one, which has a slight country blues flavor to it, makes use of chromatically descending 6ths on strings 4 and 2. I like to use hybrid picking (pick and fingers) for this one, but you'll see it played with just a pick (or just fingers) as well.

TRACK 3
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 90 (♩ = ♩)

G G7 G°7 Cm G D7

w/ pick & fingers
let ring

LICK 2

Here's another idea with the same chromatically descending line on string 4. This time, however, we're moving it against two G pedal tones—the open third string, and the high G on string 1, which is allowed to ring throughout the descending line.

TRACK 3
0:11

CD 1 ♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩)

G G7 G°7 Cm G C7 C#7 D7

w/ pick & fingers
let ring

LICK 3

This interesting lick combines elements of the first two ideas. We again have chromatically descending 6ths, only this time they're on strings 5 and 3. But we're also pulling off each top note to the open G string, which creates the illusion of a G pedal tone. The ending is also different, as we ascend chromatically from the open low E string to a first inversion (3rd on the bottom) D7.

TRACK 3

0:21

CD 1

♩ = 90 (♩ = ♩)

G G^o7 C6 G D7/F#

w/ pick & fingers
let ring

LICK 4

This example makes use of an ascending chromatic line on string 5 from the 3rd (B) up to the 5th (D) underneath octave G pedal tones (open third string and first string, 3rd fret). We also end with another classic move: a dominant ninth V chord approached from a half step above.

TRACK 3

0:32

CD 1

♩ = 90 (♩ = ♩)

G G/B C C^o7 G/D E^b9 D9

w/ pick & fingers
let ring

Variations

Each one of these turnarounds can yield many more by employing a slight variation. For example, take the notes of one and the rhythmic approach of the other—or vice versa. Here's an example that takes this idea to the limit. We're combining the chromatically descending lines on strings 2, 4, and 3 from Licks 1, 2, and 3, respectively, to form chords on strings 4–2. We're also partially employing the high G pedal tone idea and broken triplet rhythm from Lick 4. The result is something entirely different, but it's made of all common ingredients.

TRACK 3

0:43

CD 1

♩ = 76 (♩ = ♩)

G G7 G^o7 Cm6 G D7

let ring - 4

Also notice that each lick approaches the walk up to the root of the V chord (D in this case) a little differently. You can mix and match those endings with other beginnings and so on. Before you know it, four turnaround licks will turn into dozens! Have fun with these ideas!

LESSON #4:

OPEN-POSITION TURNAROUNDS IN THE KEY OF A

A blues player is always in need of a good turnaround lick. They show up everywhere in blues songs: intros, verses, solos, endings, etc. Sadly, many players seem to neglect this crucial ingredient. You can often tell when a player hasn't spent time learning turnaround licks. They usually end up kind of treading water at that point, essentially waiting for the band to execute the turnaround for them. But we can take an active role in the turnaround while also making them memorable. In this lesson, we'll concentrate on open-position turnarounds in the key of A.

Where It Goes

Turnaround licks most often appear in the 12-bar format during the last two measures—11 and 12—and they generally move from the I chord to the V chord. This usually sets up a return to the top of the form, but can also be used to end the song, in which case the ending would resolve on the I instead of the V. Most often, they make use of chromatic motion to do this. Let's look at a chord chart of a 12-bar blues illustrating the placement of the turnaround.

Chord chart for a 12-bar blues in the key of A. The chart shows two lines of measures. The first line contains measures 1 through 6, and the second line contains measures 7 through 12. Chords are indicated above the measures: I (A) in measures 1, 3, 5, 11, and 12; IV (D) in measures 2, 4, 6, 10, and 12; V (E) in measures 9 and 11. A bracket labeled 'Turnaround' spans measures 11 and 12. The chart ends with 'etc.'

Licks

Now that we know where they go, let's get to the licks.

LICK 1

This first idea has been used by countless bluesmen and made ultra-famous by ZZ Top. It features a chromatic descent on string 4 that moves from the 7th (G) down to the 5th (E) below a high A pedal tone on string 1.

TRACK 4
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 110 (♩ = ♩)

A A7 A^o7 Dm A/E E

w/ pick & fingers
let ring — 4 — let ring — 4 — let ring — 4 —

5 5 5 5 0 2 0

0 5 4 3 5 0

LICK 2

Here's another take on the first example where we're basically moving everything down an octave.

TRACK 4
0:08

CD 1 ♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

A A7/G F[#]o7 Dm/F A/E F7 E7

w/ pick & fingers
let ring — 4 — let ring — 4 — let ring — 4 —

2 2 2 2 2 4 3 3 2 2 0

0 3 2 1 0

LICK 3

In this lick, we're pitting an ascending chromatic line on string 2 from the 3rd (C#) up to the 5th (E) against a high A pedal tone on string 1. We end with an E7 fragment on the top three strings approached by a half step above.

TRACK 4
0:18

CD 1

♩ = 92 (♩ = ♩)

A D D#°7 A F7 E7

let ring

T 2 5 2 3 3 4 5 5 4 3 4

A 0

B 0

LICK 4

Here's a great sounding one that's got a bit more of a modern flair to it. We're barring A and C# on strings 3-2 and moving the chromatic line of G-F#-F#-E below it. This results in the colorful harmonies of A7, F#m, F+, and A/E.

TRACK 4
0:28

CD 1

♩ = 120 (♩ = ♩)

A A7/G F#m F+ A/E E

let ring

T 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

A 0 5 2 4 2 3 2 2

B 0 5 4 3 2 2 3 0

Variations

By slightly varying and combining the previous licks, we can expand our turnaround vocabulary considerably. For example, take the notes of one and the rhythmic approach of the other—or vice versa. Here's an example demonstrating this idea that starts with Lick 1 as the foundation. However, we're adding the chromatically ascending notes on string 2 from Lick 3 as well. This results in a bit of a finger-twister, because we've got descending notes on string 4, ascending notes on string 2, and a static high pedal tone on top. The result sounds pretty interesting, though.

TRACK 4
0:37

CD 1

♩ = 76 (♩ = ♩)

A A7 D/F# F7 A7 F7 E7

w/ pick & fingers

T 5 5 3 5 5 5 4 3

A 5 2 4 3 5 4 3

B 0 5 4 3 0

Also notice that each lick in this lesson approaches the walk up to the root of the V chord (E in this case) a little differently. You can mix and match those endings with other beginnings and so on. Before you know it, four or five turnaround licks will turn into dozens! Experiment with this concept and have fun!

LESSON #5:

OPEN-POSITION TURNAROUNDS IN THE KEY OF D

You can never know too many good turnaround licks. You'll get more mileage out of them than you will just about any other licks in your bag of tricks, because they show up everywhere in a blues tune: intros, outros, solos, verses—you name it. So, instead of treading water and waiting for the band to execute the turnaround for you, take an active role and lead the charge! You'll sound more professional, and your band will as well. In this lesson, we'll concentrate on open-position turnarounds in the key of D.

Where It Goes

Turnaround licks most often appear in the 12-bar format during the last two measures—11 and 12—and they generally move from the I chord to the V chord. This will set up a return to the top of the form for another chorus. (They can also be used to end the song, in which case the ending would resolve on the I instead of the V.) Most often, turnarounds make use of chromatic motion. Let's look at a chord chart of a 12-bar blues illustrating the placement of the turnaround.

Licks

Now that we know where to put these licks, let's get down to it.

LICK 1

Here's one of the most common of all. We're using a chromatically descending line from the 7th (C) down to the 5th (A) on string 5 and holding a D pedal tone on string 2 throughout.

TRACK 5
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩)

D D7/C D°7/B Gm/Bb D/A A7

w/ pick & fingers
let ring

LICK 2

This is a fun one that's played with a straight feel (not swung). We're moving chromatic 6ths on strings 3 and 1 down—from C₄/A to A/F#. Notice also that, for the V chord, we simply remain on the A/F# dyad. With the open A string below it, this creates an A6 sound.

TRACK 5
0:10

CD 1 ♩ = 104

D D7 D°7 Gm D A6

w/ pick & fingers
let ring

LICK 3

Here's a nice one that uses a chromatic line from C down to A on string 3 beneath a dual pedal tone of D and A on strings 2 and 1, respectively. The resulting harmonies are quite colorful.

TRACK 5
0:19

CD 1

♩ = 98 (♩ = ♪)

D D7 D6 Gm(add9) D A7

let ring

5 3 5 3 5 3 5 2 0 2

0 5 3 4 3 3 3 3 4 0

LICK 4

This lick is a bit tricky on the fingering, but it's a really nice one in a slower-tempo blues. It features chromatically descending 6ths below a D pedal tone on string 2. The approach to the V chord (A7) is also different, as it includes a chromatically ascending dyad on strings 3 and 2.

TRACK 5
0:30

CD 1

♩ = 72 (♩ = ♪)

D D7/C D°7/B Gm/Bb D/A A7

w/ pick & fingers

let ring

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 0 1 2 3

0 2 2 1 0 0 3 0 1 2

0 3 2 2 1 1 0 4 0

Variations

Remember that each one of these turnarounds can yield many more by employing a slight variation. For example, take the notes of one and the rhythmic approach of the other—or vice versa. Here's an example where we're combining the rhythms of Lick 2 with the notes of Lick 4 (mostly) to get something entirely different.

TRACK 5
0:43

CD 1

♩ = 100

D D7/C D°7/B Gm/Bb D/A A6

w/ pick & fingers

let ring

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2

0 2 2 1 0 0 3 2 2 2

0 3 2 2 1 1 0 4 0

Each lick also approaches the walk up to the root of the V chord (A in this case) a little differently, so you can mix and match those endings with other beginnings and so on. Before you know it, you'll have dozens of turnaround licks under your belt. Repeat this idea for each turnaround you learn, and the possibilities are endless!

LESSON #6:

OPEN-POSITION TURNAROUNDS IN THE KEY OF C

You can never know too many good turnaround licks. Besides lending a professional sound to you and your band, they help separate the sections of a blues song. Since they're so ubiquitous in the blues language, it really helps to be armed with twice as many as you think you'll need. When you're really burning, sometimes the turnaround can sneak up on you, and you'd better have a stockpile of choices that you can pull off at a moment's notice. In this lesson, we'll concentrate on open-position turnarounds in the key of C.

Where It Goes

Turnaround licks are most often used in the 12-bar format, in which they appear in the last two measures—11 and 12—and they generally move from the I chord to the V chord. This usually sets up a return to the top of the form. (They can also be used to end the song, in which case the ending would be changed to resolve on the I instead of the V.) Most often, they make use of chromatic motion to do this. Here's a chord chart of a 12-bar blues illustrating the placement of the turnaround.

Chord chart for a 12-bar blues in the key of C. The chart shows two lines of music. The first line has measures 1-6 with chords I, IV, I, and IV. The second line has measures 7-12 with chords I, V, IV, I, V, and I. A bracket labeled 'Turnaround' spans measures 11 and 12. The chart ends with 'etc.'

Licks

All right, now let's get to the licks!

LICK 1

This first one makes use of octave pedal tone C notes—one on string 5 and one, an octave higher, on string 2. The movement comes from a chromatically descending line on string 3, which moves from the $\flat 7$ th (B \flat) down to the 5th (open G string).

CD 1 TRACK 6 0:00

$\text{♩} = 80$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

C C7 C $\flat 7$ Fm/C C G7

w/ pick & fingers let ring

TAB

T											
A	0	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	0		
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2 3

LICK 2

This example exploits the low E string as the 3rd of C for the beginning of a chromatically ascending phrase up to the 5th, G. This is sounded against a pedal tone C note on string 2. To cap it off, we approach the G7 chord (V) by a half step below.

CD 1 TRACK 6 0:11

$\text{♩} = 90$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

C C/E F F $\sharp 7$ C/G F $\sharp 7$ G7

w/ pick & fingers let ring

TAB

T											
A	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	3	3	3	3
B	3	0	0	1	1	2	2	3			

LICK 3

In this lick, we move chromatic 6ths on strings 3 and 1 down from B \flat /G to G/E. For the V chord approach, we use an interesting move where we continue sliding the G/E 6th—now moved to strings 4 and 2—down chromatically to reach F/D (b7th and 5th of G7, respectively).



TRACK 6

0:23

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 90$ (♩ = ♩)

C C7 C \flat 7 Fm C G7

w/ pick & fingers

1 3 2 1 0 5 4 3

3 3 2 2 1 1 0 5 4 3

LICK 4

This colorful turnaround moves a chromatic line from B \flat (b7th) to G (5th) on string 3. Above that, we hold two pedal tones: C on string 2 and E (open first string). This creates the slightly unusual harmonies of C7–C6–C+–C. We wrap it up by sliding into the V chord (G7) from a half step above.



TRACK 6

0:34

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 90$ (♩ = ♩)

C C7 C6 C+ C A \flat 7 G7

let ring

1 3 1 0 1 0 1 0 0 0

3 3 2 1 1 1 0 4 3 3

Variations

Remember that each one of these turnarounds can yield many more by slightly varying another example. For example, take the notes of one and the rhythmic approach of the other—or vice versa. Here's an example where we're using the block chord rhythmic approach of Lick 1 with the high dual-pedal tone idea of Lick 4. We've replaced the E pedal tone with a high G, though, which results in the harmonies of C–C7–C6–Fm(add9)–C. We also see a variation on the V chord here. Instead of moving A \flat 7 to G7, as in Example 4, we're moving A \flat 9 to G9.



TRACK 6

0:44

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 90$ (♩ = ♩)

C C7 C6 Fm(add9) C A \flat 9 G9

1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 4 3

3 3 2 2 1 1 0 3 3 2

Another idea is to mix the chromatic moves of measure 1 with the V chord approaches in measure 2. You can mix and match one ending with another beginning and so on. Before you know it, four turnaround licks will turn into dozens! Have fun!

LESSON #7:

MOVEABLE TURNAROUND LICKS

In blues, a turnaround happens at every corner. Consequently, you can never know too many good turnaround licks. They help to bookmark an intro, verse, or solo, and they make you (and the band) sound more professional as well. That's why it's good to be armed with as many as possible. In this lesson, we're going to focus on moveable turnaround licks—i.e., ones that contain no open strings and can therefore be moved to any key.

Where It Goes

Though they can appear in other forms, turnaround licks are most often used in the 12-bar format. In this instance, they appear in the last two measures—11 and 12—and generally move from the I chord to the V chord, which usually sets up a return to the top of the form. In open-position turnaround licks, chromatic motion is often used. However, in moveable turnarounds, which are often comprised of single notes, this isn't always the case. Here's a chord chart of a 12-bar blues illustrating the placement of the turnaround.

Chord chart for a 12-bar blues. The first line shows measures 1-6 with chords I, IV, I, IV. The second line shows measures 7-12 with chords I, V, IV, I, V, I. A bracket labeled 'Turnaround' spans measures 11 and 12. The chart ends with 'etc.'

Licks

As mentioned earlier, many of these licks are built from single-note lines, as opposed to the chord- or dyad-based turnarounds often played in open position. This isn't to say that we can't apply chords or dyads to moveable licks—we will actually do that in one of these licks—but that's not the norm. These licks mostly have one purpose: to generate some excitement while logically targeting and resolving to notes of the V chord—be it the root, 3rd, 5th, or 7th.

LICK 1

This first example in C is a classic that ascends up a major arpeggio and comes down the blues scale. Notice that the root (G) of the V chord, G7, is nailed squarely.

CD 1 TRACK 7 0:00

Tempo: ♩ = 90 (♩ = ♩)

Chords: C7, G7

Tablature: 10 10 9 8 11 8 11 10 8 10 9 10 10

LICK 2

In this lick in A, we're moving 3rd dyads on strings 3–2 down chromatically from E/G (5th/b7th) to C#/E (3rd/5th). We finish off with a classic move of ♭3rd (C)–root (A)–5th, where the ♭3rd is treated to a bluesy quarter-step bend.

TRACK 7

0:10

CD 1

♩ = 90 (♩ = ♩)

A7

E7

LICK 3

This one is in D and demonstrates the effectiveness of a repetitive bending move that gives way to a resolution on the V chord's ♭7th note.

TRACK 7

0:21

CD 1

♩ = 110 (♩ = ♩)

D7

A7

LICK 4

Here's one that's reminiscent of Clapton's work in Cream. It features the unison slide in measure 1—i.e., picking the tonic G note on string 1 and then quickly sliding to it on string 2—and a few bluesy quarter-step bends on the ♭3rd (B♭) and ♭7th (F).

TRACK 7

0:30

CD 1

♩ = 116

G7

D7

Variations

Each one of these turnarounds can yield many more by employing a slight variation. For instance, here's an example of mixing elements from Lick 1 and Lick 3.

TRACK 7

0:38

CD 1

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩)

C7

G7

LESSON #8:

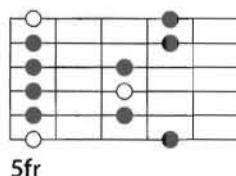
REPLACING THE $\flat 7$ TH WITH THE 6TH

A lot of players spend their entire career soloing over the blues with nothing more than the minor pentatonic or blues scale, and many have been quite successful with this approach. However, there's a load of other melodic possibilities out there if you feel so inclined to assimilate them. In this lesson, we're going to talk about one of the easiest ways to freshen up some stale minor pentatonic licks. We'll replace the $\flat 7$ th tone with the 6th tone.

Traditional Minor Pentatonic

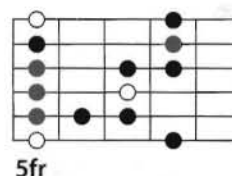
The standard minor pentatonic scale is spelled 1- $\flat 3$ -4-5- $\flat 7$. Its cousin, the blues scale, simply adds the $\flat 5$ th to this. Nearly all blues players know these scales, but to be thorough, let's take a look at the most common fingering for these in the key of A.

A MINOR PENTATONIC



5fr

A BLUES SCALE

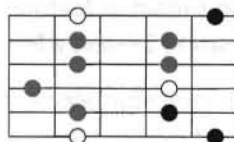


5fr

Minor Pentatonic with 6th in Place of $\flat 7$ th

By replacing the $\flat 7$ th (G, in this case) with the 6th tone (F#), we create a new type of scale that, though it sees a good deal of action, doesn't have a standardized name—hence the unwieldy name given here. Here's the modified box position in A for this scale.

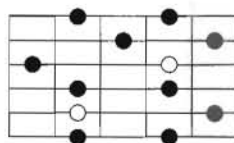
A MINOR PENTATONIC WITH 6TH—BOX FORM



4fr

Many players know the standard minor pentatonic and blues scales in more than one place on the neck, and it's good to do the same with any new scale you learn. Here's another common position for this new scale with the root of the scale on string 5.

A MINOR PENTATONIC WITH 6TH—ROOT ON STRING 5



11fr

Where to Use It

You can use this scale any time you'd normally use the minor pentatonic in a blues song. It sounds a bit more sophisticated or uptown. B.B. King favors this sound a lot, as does Robben Ford and other jazzier blues players. It may take a bit of getting used to with regards to fingering, because you'll be forced out of your comfortable box shapes at times, but it's well worth it.

The scale sounds particularly good over the IV chord, because the 6th tone (F# in this case) happens to be the 3rd of the IV chord (D7). In fact, when you consider the notes of this scale—A, C, D, E, and F#—you'll find that it's really tailor-made for the D7: A = 5th, C = $\flat 7$ th, D = root, E = 9th, and F# = 3rd. There's not a bad note there. That said, the scale makes an excellent alternate choice to the standard minor pentatonic over the I and V chords as well.

Licks

Let's hear what this scale can do. We'll work in the key of A exclusively for this lesson, but remember that both of the scale forms shown are moveable, so you can play them in any key.

LICK 1

This first one takes place in the box form and includes a few quarter-step bends.

TRACK 8

0:00

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♯♩)

A7 D7

T
A
B

LICK 2

And here's one that makes use of the 6th in the lower octave as well. This will require a quick position shift back to reach the low F♯. You may also want to fret the C♯ notes in measure 2 with your second finger, so your first finger can be in position for the F♯.

TRACK 8

0:08

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♯♩)

A7

T
A
B

LICK 3

Here's an example that demonstrates the effectiveness of this scale over the IV chord. This is played over a straight groove and has a bit of a Robben Ford vibe to it. Over the I chord (A7), we're playing A minor pentatonic (with one quick nod to the A blues scale in measure 2). In measure 5, however, with the arrival of the IV chord, we replace the ♭7th with the 6th and use our new scale. Notice how the phrase really wakes up here with the new note.

TRACK 8

0:19

♩ = 104

A7 D7 A7

T
A
B

etc.

LESSON #9:

MAKING THE MAJOR PENTATONIC SCALE SOUND BLUESY

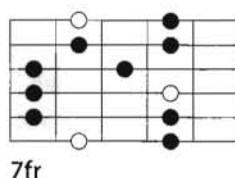
Though many players know the major pentatonic scale, fewer make consistent use of it in their playing. This is often because they feel it sounds a little too happy and not bluesy enough. However, one listen to the blues giants of yesterday and today, including B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Albert Collins, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, among others, will confirm that it is in fact used quite often and to great effect. In this lesson, we're going to talk about some ways we can tame the brightness of the scale down a bit and make it suitable for the soulfulness of the blues.

Common Scale Forms

Before we get started, let's look at two common major pentatonic scale forms we'll be using in this lesson. We'll work in the key of C throughout, but since these forms contain no open strings, they're moveable to any key.

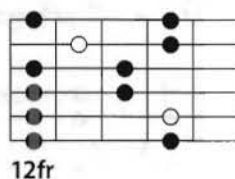
C MAJOR PENTATONIC SCALE - BOX FORM (ROOT ON STRING 6)

This first form is similar to the standard minor pentatonic "box position" with the root on string 6. In the key of C, this will be in seventh and eighth position.



C MAJOR PENTATONIC SCALE (ROOT ON STRING 5)

This form puts the root of the scale on string 5 and appears in twelfth position in C.



When we just play these notes over a blues, they can sound a bit square. But they don't have to. Subtlety goes a long way in the blues, as we'll soon see. Now that we know the scale forms, let's learn how to bluesify them a bit.

Half-Step Grace Notes

This is one of the easiest ways to add a bit of grit to these forms. You can employ both ascending and descending half-step slides and/or half-step hammer-ons or pull-offs to great effect. Common notes for gracing into include the 2nd (9th), 3rd, 5th, and 6th. Let's check out this idea with a classic example from the box form. We're sliding up to the 3rd and down to the 2nd here:

CD 1 **TRACK 9**
0:00

♩ = 90 (♩♩ = ♩♩♩)

T
A
B

10 8 9 10 10 7 10

This example is full of grace notes, including slides up to the 6th, 3rd, and 5th, and a pull-off down to the 2nd:

TRACK 9
0:07

♩ = 84 (♩ = ♪)

Quarter-Step Bends

Bends are a blues guitarist's best friend, but strangely enough, many players seem to apply most of their bending to the minor pentatonic scale. We can seriously dress up our major pentatonic licks as well, though, by applying a few well-placed quarter-step bends. The two most commonly bent notes in this fashion are the 2nd and the 6th.

Here's an example to show how effective this subtle inflection can be with a quarter-step bend on the 2nd.

TRACK 9
0:17

♩ = 84 (♩ = ♪)

This example demonstrates a bend on the 6th in the box form.

TRACK 9
0:27

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪)

Half-Step Bends

These are the real kicker. They're commonly applied to the same notes as the quarter-step bends: the 2nd and 6th. This will access the $\flat 3$ rd and $\flat 7$ th, respectively, so you'll technically be playing notes from the minor pentatonic, but I'm including the concept here because it's a totally different sound than simply playing those notes as unbent. Here's a phrase that accesses both bends and both scale forms.

TRACK 9
0:35

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪)

To hear just how big of a difference these ideas make, go back through and play all the licks, leaving out the grace notes and bends. It doesn't take long to see how much they're missed.

LESSON #10:

ESSENTIAL BLUES DOUBLE STOPS

Though we spend much of our time in the 12-bar blues playing either single notes or chords, there are plenty of spots that can benefit from some well placed double stops, or dyads. One listen to players like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Robben Ford, Buddy Guy, among many others, and you'll hear plenty of these two-string textures cropping up in solos, licks, riffs, and more. In this lesson, we're going to look at some of the most essential double-stop shapes in the blues and how to use them.

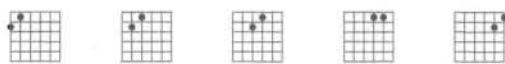
What Is a Double Stop?

A double stop is created when we play two notes on the guitar simultaneously. Though the notes are usually on adjacent strings, they can be on non-adjacent strings as well. Double stops can be strummed with the pick or played hybrid-style (pick and fingers) or fingerstyle. Some licks and riffs usually dictate a method that works best, while some licks can be just as easily played with all three methods.

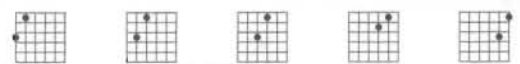
3rds

The interval of a 3rd is probably the most common, so we'll start with those shapes. Here are the two types of 3rds—major and minor—and how they lay out on each string set.

MAJOR 3RDS



MINOR 3RDS



Now let's check out some riffs and licks that make use of 3rds. Note that these shapes will often be decorated with grace notes via hammer-ons, pull-offs, or slides. This first one in A is a classic blues guitar riff that was most likely transcribed from piano and organ players. This type of thing appears equally in comping patterns and solos.



TRACK 10
0:00

CD 1

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

TAB: T: 8 7 5 6 7 7 | 8 7 5 6 7

The 3rd shape is quite common on strings 3 and 2, as is evidenced by this turnaround figure in E. In this example, and the countless variations on it, we're moving a minor 3rd shape down from the 5th/7th of a key to the 3rd/5th.



TRACK 10
0:16

CD 1

♩ = 104 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

TAB: T: 3 4 3 3 2 2 | 0 1 2

4ths

The perfect 4th is incredibly common as well, but its usage isn't quite as broad and varied as the 3rd. Here are the perfect 4th shapes on each string set:



The 4th is constantly used on the top two strings in Chuck Berry-type licks and riffs such as this.

TRACK 10
0:25

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪)

Tritones

A tritone is the distance of a $\sharp 4$ th or $\flat 5$ th. Since it's present within the intervals of a dominant seventh chord, it's only natural that it would show up quite a bit in riffs and licks. Here are the tritone shapes on each string set:



Here's a lick in D that demonstrates the two most common tritone shapes: those on the strings 4–3 and 2–1. Incidentally, this lick contains two other types of double stops. Can you identify them?

TRACK 10
0:35

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪)

6ths

Because of their wide distance, 6ths are usually played on non-adjacent strings. Here are the major and minor 6th shapes for the different strings sets.

MAJOR 6THS



MINOR 6THS



6ths are most common on strings 3 and 1, where they are constantly used in turnaround licks such as this one in E:

TRACK 10
0:44

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪)

w/ pick & fingers

That wraps it up for this lesson. The next time you're listening to your favorite players, take note of their double-stop usage and see how many instances of these types of licks you hear. Chances are a few of them will crop up!

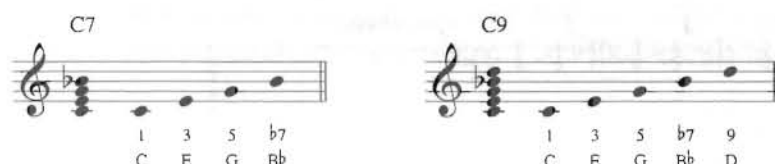
LESSON #11:

DOMINANT NINTH CHORDS

Most people know that the blues is based on dominant harmonies. In many songs, this means dominant seventh chords are used throughout. However, there are other dominant chords used as well to great effect. In this lesson, we'll take a look at one of them: the dominant ninth chord.

Construction

A dominant seventh chord contains the root, 3rd, 5th, and $\flat 7$ th, and the ninth chord takes this "stacking of 3rds" concept one note further by adding the 9th on top. Here's how this looks with a C dominant chord.



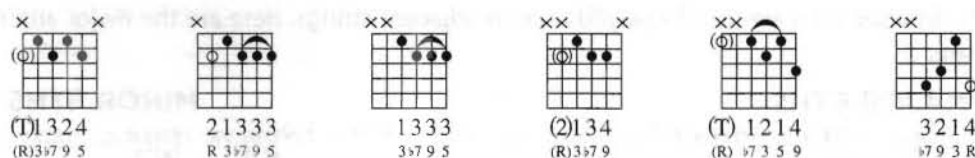
The 9th is actually the same note as the 2nd of the scale; it's simply called the 9th because it's derived from the process of continuing to stack notes on top of the triad and seventh chords. These notes (above the octave) are called extensions; consequently, a ninth chord is a type of extended chord.

Chord Voicings

Though viewing all of the notes stacked straight up like that is an easy way to identify them all, we never play them that way on the guitar. The voicings we use have the notes jumbled up a little bit, which not only makes them easier to finger, but makes them sound a bit less dense. It's also important to note that we don't always include all five notes of a ninth chord in each voicing. In fact, the only notes that are absolutely essential are the 3rd, $\flat 7$ th, and 9th.

Why is this? Well, the bass is normally playing the root, so we don't *need* to play that (though we often do). And the 5th does not alter the quality of the chord; it's the same note whether it's a major ninth, minor ninth, or dominant ninth chord. (The 5th can be altered though—raised or lowered by half step—in which case it would create an altered dominant chord, which is the subject of another lesson.)

Now let's take a look at some common dominant ninth chord voicings on the guitar. In these voicings, the degrees of the chord (3rd, 5th, etc.) will be labeled below the fingering so you can see which notes are being included and where they're located. The root will be shown as an open circle on the chord grid. For voicings in which the root is not present, an open circle will appear in parentheses to show you where the root would be—sometimes these parenthetical roots can be optional as well.



So, in essence, there are basically three main shapes we use: one with the optional root on string 6, one with the root on string 5 (and several leaner versions of it), and one with the root on string 1. The latter is known as the "Freddie King chord," because he famously used it in "Hideaway," among other songs.

Riffs

Let's take a look at how these shapes are typically used. Generally speaking, extended chords are usually applied in jazzier blues songs; a slow blues like "Stormy Monday" would be a good example.

RIFF 1

The following riff demonstrates the first four measures of a blues in G. We make use of the sixth-string root voicing for the I chord and the fifth-string root voicing for the IV chord. Notice also how some of the chords are approached by half step—another typical move in this type of blues.

TRACK 11

0:00

♩ = 60 (♩ = ♩)

Chords: G9, B9, C9, Ab9, G9, F#9, G9

Tablature: T, A, B strings with fingerings (1-5) for each chord.

RIFF 2

Another common use for these two voicings is in a funkier blues tune. Listen to Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Tightrope" for this type of thing. Here's an example of this idea in a B \flat blues—measures 1–3.

TRACK 11

0:22

♩ = 84

Chords: A9, B \flat 9, D9, E \flat 9, B \flat 9

Tablature: T, A, B strings with fingerings (1-5) for each chord.

RIFF 3

In this final example, measures 1–8 of a romping blues in E, we'll take a look at the "Freddie King" voicing. This one also uses the rootless version of the fifth-string root voicing in typical fashion.

TRACK 11

0:36

♩ = 108 (♩ = ♩)

Chords: E9, A9, G \sharp 9, A9, E9, D \sharp 9, E9

Tablature: T, A, B strings with fingerings (1-5) for each chord.

LESSON #12:

DOMINANT THIRTEENTH CHORDS

The blues uses predominantly dominant harmony as its basis for the I, IV, and V chords. However, this doesn't mean we're limited to playing only dominant seventh chords. There are plenty of other dominant chords used as well to great effect. In this lesson, we'll take a look at one of them: the dominant thirteenth chord.

Construction

A dominant seventh chord contains the root, 3rd, 5th, and $\flat 7$ th, and the thirteenth chord takes this "stacking of 3rds" concept to the limit and continues on up with the 9th, 11th, and 13th. Here's how this looks with a C dominant chord.



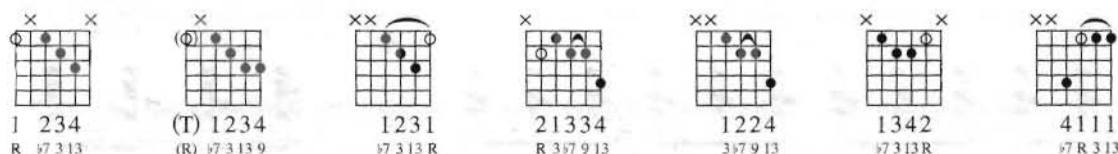
Note that the 9th is actually the same note as the 2nd, the 11th is the same note as the 4th, and the 13th is the same note as the 6th of the scale; they're labeled as these higher numbers because they're derived from the process of continuing to stack notes on top of the triad and seventh chords into the next octave. These notes (above the octave) are called extensions; consequently, a thirteenth chord is a type of extended chord.

Chord Voicings

Though viewing all of the notes stacked straight up like that is an easy way to identify them all, we never play them that way on the guitar. The voicings we use have some notes rearranged, and often several notes are omitted as well. After all, we only have six strings (usually), and a full thirteenth chord has seven notes. In fact, the only notes that are absolutely essential are the 3rd, $\flat 7$ th, and 13th.

Why is this? Well, the bass is normally playing the root, so we don't need to play that (though we often do). The 5th does not alter the quality of the chord; it's the same note whether it's a major thirteenth, minor thirteenth, or dominant thirteenth chord. The same can be said of the 9th and 11th. Though they are extensions, they don't alter the basic dominant quality of the thirteenth chord. (The 5th, 9th, and 11th can be altered though—raised or lowered by half step—in which case it would create an altered dominant chord, which is the subject of another lesson.)

Let's take a look at some common dominant thirteenth chord voicings on the guitar. In these voicings, the degrees of the chord (3rd, $\flat 7$ th, etc.) will be labeled below the fingering so you can see which notes are being included and where they're located. The root will be shown as an open circle on the chord grid. For voicings in which the root is not present, an open circle will appear in parentheses to show you where the root would be—sometimes these parenthetical roots can be optional as well.



So there are basically four main shapes here:

- ▶ Root on string 6 or string 1 (and several leaner versions)
- ▶ Root on string 5 (and the rootless version of it)
- ▶ Root on string 2
- ▶ Root on string 3

Riffs

Let's take a look at how these shapes are typically used. Generally speaking, extended chords are usually applied in jazzier blues songs; a slow blues like "Stormy Monday" would be a good example.

RIFF 1

Here's the first four measures of a blues in G. We make use of the sixth-string root voicing for the I chord and the fifth-string root voicing for the IV chord. Notice also how some of the chords are approached by half step—another typical move in this type of blues.

TRACK 12

0:00

1

♩ = 58 (♩ = ♯♩)

G13 F#13 G13 Db13 C13 B13 C13 Ab13 G13

TAB

RIFF 2

You can also use these in more of a funky blues setting. Here's an example of that idea with a V-IV-I intro in A.

TRACK 12

0:18

1

♩ = 100

E13 D13 A13 G#13 A13

TAB

RIFF 3

In this final jazz blues example in the key of E, we'll alternate the second-string root voicing (E13) with the sixth-string root one (A13) and then move up to different E13 voicings chord-melody style.

TRACK 12

0:32

1

♩ = 120 (♩ = ♯♩)

E13 D#13 E13 A13 D#13 E13

TAB

Check out some blues players who like to dabble in jazzier sounds, such as Robben Ford, or listen to some jazz blues songs to hear some of these voicings in action. They can really freshen up your rhythm playing and lend a sophistication to your sound that will really fit the bill on certain songs. Enjoy!

LESSON #13: MELODIC IMITATION

If you listen to the great blues soloists, their playing seems to almost tell a story. It rarely comes off as mindless noodling; the phrases feel connected and seem to grow into one another organically. This may come naturally to some players, or it may be a learned skill that they picked up from listening to and/or imitating other greats. If you spend any time analyzing these story-telling solos, you'll usually find several devices at work. One of these is melodic imitation, and that's the subject of this lesson.

What Is Melodic Imitation?

When we make use of melodic imitation, we play a melody that recalls the contour or shape of the one prior to it. This immediately gives the listener something to grab hold of. People generally like hearing something that they know (assuming they liked it the first time), and this idea exploits that idea. The listener recognizes what you're doing—"Oh, this is kind of like that last melody"—and therefore feels connected to what you're playing. Of course, this often happens very quickly, sometimes in a second or less, but it still makes a notable impact.

Let's take a look at a basic example of melodic imitation at work. We're in the key of A here:

TRACK 13
0:00

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

Notice how we begin with a simple melodic statement, which is marked "A." This is simply two notes—C# up to E—but when we repeat the idea at a different pitch level later—F# up to A ("A1")—we immediately hear the connection between the two.

Now that you've got the basic idea down, let's check out some examples to hear this idea at work. Here's an idea over a slow 12/8 blues in C. We're using two examples of melodic imitation here, labeled as A phrases and B phrases. Notice that the end of phrase A1 dovetails into the beginning of phrase B, which is very common.

TRACK 13
0:09

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 56$

Here's an example of a minor blues in G with a straight feel. Note that the rhythms of the imitations are quite different from the original phrases, but the effect is still definitely felt.

TRACK 13
0:28
♩ = 100

Gm

A

A1

B

B1

Gm

Augmentation and Diminution

Another form of melodic imitation is the augmentation (spreading out) or diminution (squeezing together) of a melody. With this technique, we generally repeat the same melody (or something very similar), but we either spread out the note values or decrease them. This can be subtle or drastic, but it's nearly always recognized by the listener.

Here's an example of a phrase in A that uses augmentation. The first time the phrase is heard, it's consecutive 8th notes. Each time after that, the length is expanded. This creates a bit of tension and anticipation, which is resolved by the phrase in the second half of measure 4, leading into the IV chord (D7).

TRACK 13
0:51
♩ = 116 (♩ = ♪♪)

A7

D7

A

A1

A2

And here's an idea using diminution. We're in the key of G here playing over a straight groove. The modified phrase is a G7 arpeggio fragment: B-G-F. Again notice how tension is built and released just in time for the IV chord's arrival.

TRACK 13
1:07
♩ = 100

G7

C7

A

A1

A2

A3

A4

A5

LESSON #14: RHYTHMIC IMITATION

Rhythm is one half of every melody, and it can illicit a powerful effect on the listener when put to use in specific ways. One such method is rhythmic imitation—the idea of one phrase imitating the rhythm of another. This can help lend cohesiveness to your solos and give them more of a story-like structure. In this lesson, we'll talk about this powerful tool and how we can harness it to make a memorable statement in our solos or riffs.

What Is It?

With rhythmic imitation, the idea is to play one rhythm and then repeat it (or part of it) with another phrase. In other words, the notes may change between phrase A and phrase A1, but the rhythm will be nearly identical. We'll look at two different types of imitation here: simple and advanced.

Simple Imitation

Below we see the simplest form of rhythmic imitation. We play a certain rhythm in the first measure and then play the same exact rhythm in the second measure using a different melody. This helps create a rhythmic hook onto which the listener can grasp.

TRACK 14
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

In this second example, we're imitating a shorter rhythmic fragment that only lasts two beats. Therefore, the phrases begin every two beats instead of every measure. This is still a very basic form of imitation and is often used as well.

TRACK 14
0:10

CD 1 ♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

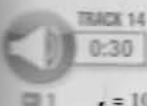
So, in simple imitation, we're repeating on the same exact place in every measure, every two beats, or every beat. There are no rhythmic surprises. Let's check out a lick using this simple imitation. This one is built from the A minor pentatonic scale. Ideas like this are commonly used at the beginning of a solo to build a foundation.

TRACK 14
0:20

CD 1 ♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

Advanced Imitation

With advanced imitation, we'll repeat the same rhythm, but it won't necessarily begin in the same spot with reference to the underlying beat. Phrase A below demonstrates simple imitation at work; the phrase is repeated every two beats, starting on the beat each time. In Phrase B, however, the phrase repeats every 1 1/2 beats, resulting in an on-the-beat/off-the-beat rhythm that's very stimulating. This is advanced imitation.



♩ = 100 (♩ = ♪)

Phrase A

♩ = 100 (♩ = ♪)

Phrase B

So, we're still imitating the same rhythm: one 8th note followed by a quarter note. But in Phrase B, instead of waiting an 8th rest so that the phrase starts on the beat each time (as in Phrase A), we're just repeating it right away. This idea can get as far out there and continue for as long as you want—just make sure you (and your band) are able to keep your place in the music!

Let's check out some licks that use the advanced imitation concept. These phrases will be set to a drum beat so you can hear how they sit within the measure. This first one takes a classic intro phrase and gives it a nice rhythmic twist on its imitation. Then we have a simple triplet phrase imitated for an on-the-beat/off-the-beat effect.



♩ = 100 (♩ = ♪)

This final lick is played over a straight groove and imitates two different phrases. The second one is a 16th-note line that's repeated every fifth 16th note—quite a headturner!



♩ = 100

LESSON #15: FRET-HAND MUTING

Fret-hand muting is the unsung hero of blues guitar. It's a vital ingredient, but it rarely gets any attention. When you're using proper fret-hand muting, you'll get only the notes you want. If not properly employed, however, you can end up with a sloppy mess. One listen to Stevie Ray Vaughan will make this blatantly obvious.

How It Works

Though your classical guitar teacher may cringe when they see the thumb creep over the top of the neck, blues guitar is *not* classical guitar; it's most often played with a pick, for Pete's sake! If the right-hand technique is so obviously different, why then shouldn't the left? Just as the classical technique (thumb behind the neck, fingers arched, etc.) suits that style, blues technique (thumb sometimes over the neck, fingers laid more flat at times, etc.) is designed for blues guitar.

For example, let's say you're playing this G note on string 4:

TRACK 15
0:00

CD 1

A classical guitarist would fret the note with the finger arched and the thumb centered on the back of the neck. However, a blues guitarist may fret the same note this way, with the first finger laying flatter and the thumb hanging over the top of the neck.

Why? Because a blues guitarist may be using an extremely heavy pick attack and applying intense vibrato. He may be picking through *all six strings* to give the note added weight and punch. (This is exactly what Stevie Ray is doing in the boogie riff before the first verse in "Pride & Joy.") When this is done, you'd better be muting all but the string you want to sound, or you'll be in for a noisy, nasty surprise!

In the photo, you can see that the thumb is lightly touching the sixth string to keep it quiet. Along with fretting the G note, the tip of the index finger is lightly touching the fifth string to keep it quiet. The top three strings are kept quiet by the underside of the first finger. Obviously, you won't fret every note this way, but there are times when it's essential to producing only the notes you want. Listen to that G note played both ways on the first CD example: first by picking only the fourth string, and then with fret-hand muting so that we can pick through every string for added punch.



Riffs and Licks

Now that we know how it works, let's check out some examples where fret-hand muting is absolutely essential in achieving clarity.

RIFF 1

This first one demonstrates one of the most common instances: a shuffle riff played with a heavy hand. Though this type of riff can be played with a streamlined, clean sound as well, it's often played with a heavy pick-hand attack where you're essentially strumming through all six strings. The separation of the notes then falls entirely on the fret hand. Only the string you're fretting should be heard; all the others should be muted.

TRACK 15
0:10

CD 1

♩ = 100 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

RIFF 2

Here's another example of that idea in the key of E, similar to what Stevie Ray plays in "Pride & Joy."

TRACK 15

0:22

CD 1

♩ = 120 (♩ = ♪)

E7

TAB

0 0 3 4 2 2 4 4 2 2 3 4 2 2 4 2

0 0 3 4 2 2 4 4 5 5 4 4 2 2 3 4

A7

E7

etc.

RIFF 3

Or take this classic shuffle rhythm figure shown here in C. It won't sound the same if you're not strumming through all the strings, and you can't do that unless you're muting.

TRACK 15

0:42

CD 1

♩ = 104 (♩ = ♪)

C7

Play 3 times

TAB

8 9 10 8 9 10 8 9

8 9 10 8 9 10 8 9

*T = Thumb on 6th str.

LICK 1

In this final lead example, we see the technique allowing us to rake up into the notes to give them extra weight. I'm muting with the pick hand here as well—not palm muting per se, but allowing my palm to touch the bass strings to make sure they're quiet as I rake up into the notes—but fret-hand muting is required as well to make this happen.

TRACK 15

0:54

CD 1

♩ = 104 (♩ = ♪)

TAB

10 7 10 7 10 9 7 9

10 7 10 9 7 9 7 9

Fret-hand muting is not always a necessity, and I don't mean to imply that. Certain blues styles, such as the cool, jazzier, uptown styles don't require it as much. Consequently, some players, such as B.B. King, don't need to use it as much because their style isn't quite as heavy-handed (although he does certainly use the technique, especially for his trademark "octave yelp"). For others, though, such as Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton, and Robben Ford, it's essential in getting their tone. Though it's rarely talked about, it's an absolutely integral part of blues technique and is certainly worthy of study.

LESSON #16:

HYBRID OR FINGERSTYLE PICKING

If you've never tried out hybrid picking or fingerstyle before, you're missing out on a whole slew of sonic possibilities. They can make many things easier to play, lend a different sound, or simply allow you to play things that are impossible with the pick alone. In this lesson, we'll take a look at these techniques and how they can be applied to blues guitar.

The Basics

Hybrid picking refers to the use of both the pick and the pick-hand fingers to pluck the strings. To get started, try plucking this chord riff by using your pick on string 4, your second finger on string 3, and your third finger on string 2.

Then, try the same riff fingerstyle—i.e., plucking only with your bare fingers. Some players don't use a pick at all, and some predominantly pick players will "palm" the pick or hold it between two fingers when using this technique. Robben Ford is one such player that makes use of the latter move.



♩ = 104 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

C7 F C7 F

w/ pick & fingers

TAB

8	10	11	10
8	10	12	10
8	10	10	10

You'll notice that this results in a tighter, snappier sound than when using the pick. All of the notes are plucked simultaneously, so you don't get the ever-so-slightly staggered effect you do when strumming with a pick. It's subtle, but it is noticeable. So now that you know what's involved, let's check out how we might use this technique when playing the blues.

Boogie-Style Riffs

Hybrid picking is excellent for those John Lee Hooker/ZZ Top-style boogie riffs. In this example in A, your fingers pluck all the notes on strings 4 and 3, while the pick or thumb takes all the notes on strings 5 and 6.



♩ = 176 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

A5

w/ pick & fingers

1/4

TAB

0	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

The “Snap”

The “snap” is what I call the technique of pulling up on the string and letting it snap back against the fretboard. This creates a loud, accented note that really pops out and gets your attention. Most players (myself included) actually accomplish this with both the thumb and the first finger pulling up on the string. Therefore, this would require you to palm the pick. However, I have seen some players accomplish this with the second finger, which allows them to hold on to the pick.

This move can be reserved for the climax of an otherwise-picked line, such as in this B blues lick.

TRACK 18

0:23

♩ = 88 (♩ = ♩)

Or it can be featured throughout for an aggressive sound that really leaps out at you, as demonstrated in this open-position lick in E, which I play entirely fingerstyle.

TRACK 18

0:32

♩ = 88 (♩ = ♩)

Those Intimate Moments

When you want to really bring things down and get intimate with your instrument, there's nothing like bare fingers on the strings. Stevie Ray Vaughan would do this often. Here's an example of this sound in a B minor pentatonic lick. I'm plucking every note with the thumb here.

TRACK 18

0:40

♩ = 62 (♩ = ♩)

Well, that'll wrap it up. The next time you grab your axe, try coaxing a few licks out of it with your fingers as well as the pick. You'll be happy you did. Enjoy!

LESSON #17: THE RAKE

The rake is an expressive device you can use for extra intensity and added sonic weight. It's one of those subtle sounds that is hard to detect but would certainly be missed if it weren't there. One listen to any solo by Stevie Ray Vaughan, Buddy Guy, or Billy Gibbons, and you're bound to hear some well-placed rakes.

How It Works

Like grace notes, rakes don't take up any real time, generally appearing at the very last second before a note. Ascending rakes are the most common, but descending rakes are used as well. Interestingly, the technique used to produce each is quite different.

The Ascending Rake

With an ascending rake, we're basically strumming down through several muted strings on the way to our target note, which is usually on one of the top three strings. The strings below this target note are muted by the palm, a fret-hand finger, or a combination of both to keep them quiet. The pick is raked across them quite deliberately to produce a clicking sound. This happens very quickly, so the individual muted strings blur together into one "bptttt" sound.

This example demonstrates the sound of a normal note followed by the same note with an ascending rake.

TRACK 17
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 100

musical notation showing a normal note followed by the same note with an ascending rake. The notation includes a treble clef, a quarter note, and a rake indicated by a diagonal line with 'x' marks on the strings below. The fretboard diagram shows the D string (4th line) and the rake indicated by a diagonal line with 'x' marks on the strings below.

UP IS DOWN?

The terms "up" and "down" or "ascending" and "descending" may be slightly confusing if you're thinking solely of physical direction. In this instance, the terms refer to the orientation of the guitar's pitches, where the thinner strings are called the high strings, and the thicker strings are called the low strings. So, an ascending rake, while going from low to high *in pitch*, actually involves moving the pick *down* toward the floor—vice versa for a descending rake.

The Descending Rake

With the descending rake, you're strumming up through muted strings on your way to a target note on a lower string. With this technique, though, the strings are muted by the fret hand—usually the underside of the first, second, or third finger. This produces a slightly different sound than the ascending rake, but the effect is similar.

Here's an example of a normal note on the D string followed by the same with a descending rake.

TRACK 17
0:09

CD 1 ♩ = 100

musical notation showing a normal note followed by the same note with a descending rake. The notation includes a treble clef, a quarter note, and a rake indicated by a diagonal line with 'x' marks on the strings below. The fretboard diagram shows the D string (4th line) and the rake indicated by a diagonal line with 'x' marks on the strings below.

Licks

Now let's check out a few licks using the rake technique.

LICK 1

One of the most dramatic uses for the descending rake is the open E string—a favorite move of Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray, among others. Check it out in this E minor pentatonic lick.

TRACK 17

0:18

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 82$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

LICK 2

Here's a typical shuffle pattern in A that makes good use of descending rakes to thicken things up.

TRACK 17

0:28

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 94$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

LICK 3

In this lick from D minor pentatonic, we see some classic examples of the ascending rake.

TRACK 17

0:42

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 94$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

LICK 4

Let's finish off with a B.B. King trademark: the octave "yelp." Use your pinky for the final high A note so that you can lay your other fingers across the strings to make sure they're quiet. That's the way B.B. does it!

TRACK 17

0:53

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 94$

LESSON #18: VIBRATO

Vibrato is one of the most expressive guitar techniques of all, and it's a shame that more players don't spend time cultivating it. It's hard to even imagine the licks of B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, or Albert King without their trademark vibratos. It comes more naturally for some, while others have to work at it. It can be learned though, just like any other technique, and it's well worth the effort.

How It Works

Vibrato is a fluctuation of pitch that can be fast, slow, controlled, frenetic, subtle, over-the-top, or any combination thereof. On the electric guitar, it's usually created by slightly bending a string and releasing it to its unbent state over and over. The more drastic the bend, the "wider" the vibrato sounds. This is why someone like Zakk Wylde's vibrato sounds different than Eric Clapton's. There are numerous methods used to produce vibrato. No single method is correct, and many players actually master several different types. The motion Eric Clapton uses is completely different than what Stevie Ray used, yet both are equally beautiful in sound. We'll look at the two main types of vibrato used in blues here (epitomized by those two mentioned), but feel free to experiment in this regard.

Stevie Ray Style—Wrist Motion

The Stevie Ray style of vibrato is perhaps what most consider to be the classic vibrato. It was also used by Hendrix, which is most likely where Stevie Ray learned it. B.B. King's vibrato is very similar to this, though it's a bit faster than what Stevie normally used. It's most commonly applied with the first finger, though it can be used with any. The motion comes from rotating the wrist back and forth, similar to the act of turning a door knob. It'll take a while to get the fluidity down, but once you do, it's very musical-sounding. Practice slowly at first and build up the speed gradually. Try it with every finger as well, because it's nice to be able to add vibrato on any note.



On string 1, you'll need to modify the motion a bit, or you'll fall off the edge of the frets! On all the other strings, most players pull *down* (toward the floor), but for the slight bends during the vibrato on string 1, you'll need to push *up* (toward the ceiling).

Clapton Style—Forearm Motion

The other most popular school of vibrato is the Clapton variety, where the motion comes from the forearm. With this type, the wrist remains in place, but the entire hand is pushed up and down with the forearm. Generally, most players tend to bend and release up toward the ceiling when using this style, which is opposite from the wrist type. Of course, you'll need to make an adjustment on string 6 so you don't push the string off the edge.



Adding Vibrato to Bent Notes

It's common to add vibrato to bent notes as well. The basic idea is to bend to pitch and slightly release over and over again. This technique is most commonly applied with the third finger while pushing the string up toward the ceiling, but it can be applied to any finger with a bend in either direction.

LICK 1

Now let's check out a few licks with vibrato to hear how it sounds. Our first lick contains a classic application of wrist vibrato: the 3rd note on string 3 of the box position with the first finger. We also finish off by using wrist vibrato with our third finger.

TRACK 18

0:00

♩ = 94 (♩ = ♩)



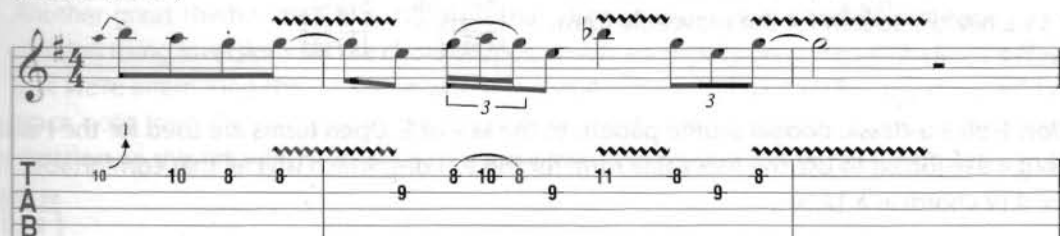
LICK 2

This lick in G takes place in the B.B. box and is reminiscent of Clapton. We're using the forearm vibrato here with the first and third fingers.

TRACK 18

0:09

♩ = 94 (♩ = ♩)



LICK 3

In this Hendrix/Stevie Ray-type example from A minor pentatonic, we're applying wrist vibrato to two strings simultaneously, which can be difficult. The motion is the same, but you may need to shift the pressure of your fretting finger slightly so that both notes sound clearly.

TRACK 18

0:18

♩ = 94 (♩ = ♩)



LICK 4

Let's finish with an E minor Clapton-style lick where we're applying vibrato to a note on string 2 that's bent up a whole step to the tonic and a note on string 3 that's bent a whole step to the 5th. These are both hugely common applications.

TRACK 18

0:28

♩ = 94 (♩ = ♩)



LESSON #19:

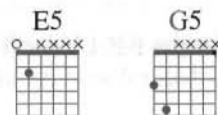
BOOGIE RHYTHMS AND CHORD RIFFS

Though it's fun to tear it up during your solo, most players actually spend most of their time playing rhythm. Therefore, it's wise to be armed with as many chord riffs and boogie lines as possible. It can prevent you from getting bored, and it'll also help to set apart the different songs in your set—especially if every single song is a 12-bar shuffle (something I would not recommend!). In this lesson, we'll take a look at several classic riffs you can use when backing a singer or another soloist.

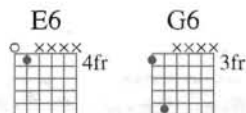
Classic 5th and 6th Patterns

In the spirit of thoroughness, we'll start here, even though most blues players are quite familiar with this idea. Still, in case you managed to slip by without ever having to play rhythm, now's your chance to catch up. The most classic of all boogie patterns is the alternated 5th and 6th chords, as popularized by Chuck Berry. The concept is simple, but the effect is a full-bodied accompaniment that's both interesting and groovin'.

The 5th portion is simply a power chord, shown here as an open E5 and a moveable form in third position as G5.



For the 6th portion, raise the 5th note a whole step to the 6th. This is no big deal in open position, but it's a healthy stretch for the moveable form.



Let's check this idea out in action. Here's a classic boogie shuffle pattern in the key of E. Open forms are used for the I and IV chords (E and A, respectively), but we're forced to use the moveable form for the V chord, which isn't all that comfortable. This would be starting from measure 9 (V chord) in a 12-bar.



♩ = 106 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

B5 B6 B5 B6 A5 A6 A5 A6 E5 E6 E5 E6 E5

T
A
B

4 4 6 6 4 4 6 6 2 2 4 4 2 2 4 4 2 2 4 4 2 2 4 4 2 2 4 4 2

Single-Note Bassline Riffs

Now let's check out some boogie patterns that use mostly single notes. Many of these function as actual basslines beneath the 5th-6th patterns we looked at above, but they sound great on guitar too. This first one is a classic idea in E that makes use of a ♭3-3 move. To make it sound really big, employ fret-hand muting to deaden every string except the one sounding. That way, you can strum through all six strings for added girth. This type of riff is often transposed to the IV and V chords too.



♩ = 106 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

N.C.(E)

T
A
B

0 0 3 4 2 2 4 4 2 2 3 4 2 2 4 2

Here's another classic that's built using only the root, octave, 7th, and 5th. It's shown here in the key of G moving from the V (D) to the IV (C) to the I (G).



51

$\bullet = 106$ ($\overset{\sim}{\bullet} \overset{\sim}{\bullet} = \overset{\sim}{\bullet} \overset{\sim}{\bullet}$)

N.C.(D7)

(C7)

(G7)

musical score for "The Wind" by The Beatles. The score is in G major, 4/4 time. It features a guitar melody in the upper staff and a bass line in the lower staff. The guitar melody starts with a G4 quarter note, followed by a dotted quarter note (A4), an eighth note (B4), and a quarter note (C5). The bass line starts with a G2 half note. The score includes a "sim." (simulazione) marking and a "7" (seven) marking. The guitar melody continues with a dotted quarter note (D5), an eighth note (E5), and a quarter note (F#5). The bass line continues with a dotted quarter note (A2), an eighth note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). The score ends with a final G4 quarter note and a G2 half note.

I-IV Alternating Riffs

Another great rhythm idea is a chord riff that alternates between I and IV and back quickly. These are played in the same position using inversions for the chord shapes, which are usually on strings 4–2. Here’s a classic example in the key of A. Notice that we’re alternating the A7 shape with a D shape, which is played by barring the third finger. Also notice the characteristic grace note from the ♭3rd (C♭) to the 3rd (C♯) for the A7 chord and the thumb-fretted low A notes. In measure 4, we see a variation on this riff, which creates a nice movement. Again, you can transpose this idea to all three chords.



CD 1

♩ = 106 (♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩} \text{♩}}^{\text{♩}}$)

A7 D A7

D A7

D A7

D A7

The second system of the musical score for 'The Wind' continues the melody in the treble clef. It features a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as chords. Below the staff, a guitar tablature (TAB) is provided, showing fret numbers (5, 6, 7) and techniques like bends (marked with a 'b' and a curved line) and natural harmonics (marked with an 'n'). The system concludes with a double bar line.

*T = Thumb on 6th str.

Variations

Almost any of these patterns can be slightly altered to create an enormous amount of variations. For instance, we could alter the order of notes in the third example, add a little triplet pull-off, and come up with something like this.



CO 1

♩ = 106 (♩♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩♩}}^3$)

N.C.(D7)

(C7)

(G7)

Musical score for "The Wind" by Peter Dinklage. The score is in 4/4 time, key of D major. It features a melody in the treble clef and a guitar tablature in the bass clef. The melody includes triplets and a "sim." (sustained) marking. The tablature uses numbers 3, 5, 7, and 9 to indicate fret positions.

Try reworking a few of the other patterns in this lesson this way, and you'll be amazed at how much mileage you can get out of such little material. Enjoy!

LESSON #20:

Robben Ford is one of the most respected blues players around today. He's got it all: tone, chops, taste, and touch. With a healthy background in jazz and R&B, Robben colors his blues playing with several unique traits that makes him easily identifiable among the masses. In this lesson, we'll explore his style in depth.

Rhythm Playing

Robben often speaks about the virtue and satisfaction in laying down a groove beneath someone else's solo, and this notion is clearly evident in his rhythmic style.

BOOGIE PATTERNS

Ford favors simplicity and, as a result, often has a unique take on standard boogie-style patterns, resulting in a clean, stripped-down sound. Here's a typical example in E.



0:00

0:00

CD 1

♩ = 120 (♩♩ = ♩♩)

N.C.(E7)

slight P.M. throughout

TAB

The first system of the guitar tab shows the following fret numbers: 0, 2, 0, 4, 0, 5, 0, 4, 0, 2, 0, 4, 0, 5, 0, 4, 0, 2. The first two measures are grouped by a slur, and the last measure is a double bar line.

CHORD VOCABULARY

Robben is extremely well-versed in jazz and therefore has quite an extensive chord vocabulary for a blues man. In G, for example, it's common to see these voicings.

Diagram illustrating fretboard positions for various chords, showing note placement and fret numbers (1-4) indicated below the grids:

- G13**: Two positions shown. First: 1342 (frets 1, 3, 4, 2). Second: 1224 (frets 1, 2, 2, 4).
- G13 \flat 9** (when moving to IV chord): 1243 (frets 1, 2, 4, 3).
- C9**: Two positions shown. First: 1324 (frets 1, 3, 2, 4). Second: 3214 (frets 3, 2, 1, 4).
- C13**: Two positions shown. First: 4111 (frets 4, 1, 1, 1). Second: 1 234 (frets 1, 2, 3, 4).
- D9sus4**: 3 421 (frets 3, 4, 2, 1).
- D7 \sharp 9**: 1243 (frets 1, 2, 4, 3).
- D13 \sharp 9**: 1234 (frets 1, 2, 3, 4).
- D13 \flat 9**: 3 4211 (frets 3, 4, 2, 1, 1).

Lead Style

When it comes to lead, Robben has some of the sweetest tone and chops around. Often imitated but never matched, his style is immediately recognizable and quite musical.

MAJOR/MINOR MIX

He gets plenty use out of the good ol' minor pentatonic and blues scales, but he also mixes in notes from the parallel major pentatonic to get a sweeter sound at times. Here's a shuffle example in the key of E that mixes E major and minor pentatonic sounds throughout. It starts in measure 9 of a 12-bar blues, over the V chord.



0:08

0:08

CD 1

♩ = 96 (♩♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩} \text{♩}}^2$)

B7

A7

E7

THE REVERSE SLIDE

Another favorite device of Robben's is the reverse slide. Here's an example in B where we're sliding down into the 4th from first a half step above and then a whole step.

TRACK 20

0:22

CD 1 ♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩)

DORIAN MINOR

Though Robben spends plenty of time playing in the 12-bar format, he's capable of playing over just about anything. Often in minor, funkier vamps, he'll work out of the Dorian mode to get some wicked angular lines. Here's a typical line in C Dorian.

TRACK 20

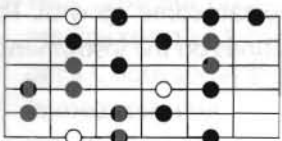
0:29

CD 1 ♩ = 104

ALTERED SOUNDS

Robben can also draw on his jazz roots to take it a bit outside when he wants to. He'll often pull off a half-whole diminished line over an altered V chord to yank an ear or two. Here's a fingering for A half-whole diminished:

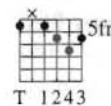
A HALF-WHOLE DIMINISHED



4fr

And the matching chord for this scale would be A13b9:

A13b9



T 1 2 4 3

Here's a line Robben might play over this chord in a straight-8th groove like "Thrill Is Gone" or "Help the Poor." In this case, the line resolves to Dm.

TRACK 20

0:38

CD 1 ♩ = 96

LESSON #21:

ACOUSTIC SLIDE RIFFS IN OPEN G

If you've ever listened to Delta blues, you've no doubt heard plenty of slide playing in Open G tuning. This was the preferred M.O. of several blues giants of the day, including the "King of the Delta Blues" himself, Robert Johnson. In this lesson, we'll take a look at some classic acoustic slide riffs in Open G tuning.

DISCLAIMER

This lesson assumes that you're familiar with basic slide technique. If you've never played slide before, you should check out some beginning instructional material first. Having said that, if you insist on plugging on, please remember the following:

- ▶ Align the slide directly above the fretwire for proper intonation
- ▶ Allow the fingers behind the slide to lightly touch the strings to help keep them quiet
- ▶ The plucking-hand fingers also often mute strings that aren't being played to keep them quiet

Tune Up!

In Open G, we're tuning a few strings down. To access it from standard tuning, you'll need to detune your sixth, fifth, and first strings down a whole step. Here's a quick method to use if you don't have a tuner handy:

- ▶ Tune your sixth string down a whole step so that it's an octave lower than your open fourth string.
- ▶ Tune your first string down a whole step so that it's an octave higher than your open fourth string.
- ▶ Tune your fifth string down a whole step so that it's an octave lower than your third string.

OPEN G TUNING: D-G-D-G-B-D

Note that this tuning is identical to Open A tuning—another popular slide tuning—in its intervallic structure. The only difference is that Open A will sound a whole step higher. However, any lick you know in Open G will also work in Open A and vice versa.

Riffs

Now let's get to the riffs. These are usually played fingerstyle—or with a thumbpick and fingers—and pretty much anything goes with regards to the technique. You can pluck each string with a different finger, similar to modern fingerstyle techniques, you can strum several strings with one finger (up or down), or you can use any combination you can come up with. The techniques used by the bluesmen of the Delta varied greatly, and this contributed to their unique sounds on the instrument.

RIFF 1

Here's a classic blues phrase that makes use of sliding double stops. Note that the C# note (fret 2, string 2) is out of key (it's the ♭5th), but it still sounds great.

TRACK 21
0:00

Open G tuning: (low to high) D-G-D-G-B-D

♩ = 80

G7

w/ slide
P.M.

w/o slide
P.M.

w/ slide

TAB

RIFF 2

This one works great as an intro. Notice the prevalence of half-step slides throughout, which are actually more common in this type of blues than whole-step slides.

TRACK 21

0:18

Open G tuning: (low to high) D-G-D-G-B-D

♩ = 80 (♩ = ♪)

N.C.(G)

G7

G°7

Cm/Eb

G/D

D

G

W/ slide
P.M.
12 12 11 12 12 11 12 12 11 12

w/o slide
w/ pick & fingers
let ring

w/ slide

0 3 0 3 2 2 1 1 0 0 5 7 7 3 0

RIFF 3

Here's an excellent riff played with a straight-8th feel. It's got a great bounce to it and really grooves. Be sure to pay attention to the separation between the thumb and fingers in measures 1 and 2. To add the vibrato in measure 3, volley the slide back and forth in front of and behind the 5th fret.

TRACK 21

0:33

Open G tuning: (low to high) D-G-D-G-B-D

♩ = 88

G7

w/ pick & fingers
5 5 5 6 6 6 7 7 7

w/ slide
0 3 2 0 0

w/o slide
5 5 5 6 6 6 7 7 7

w/ slide
0 3 2 0 0

5 3 3 2 3 0 0 2 3 0 3 2 0 0

RIFF 4

We'll close out on one that uses a good deal of single-note playing. For the ending to sound as intended, you'll need to employ some pick-hand muting. If you don't, the third string will likely ring out along with the final D string notes, and you'll get a C note above the G note. Since we want that last G note to feel resolved, we don't want this to happen. The solution is to immediately mute the G string after playing it; this is done by touching it with the same finger you used to pluck it. Obviously, this means you'll need to pluck the notes on the D string with a different finger (or your thumb).

TRACK 21

0:48

Open G tuning: (low to high) D-G-D-G-B-D

♩ = 80 (♩ = ♪)

G

w/ slide
5 3 0 3 3 3 2 0 5 3 0 3 5

The man to check out for blues slide in Open G is Robert Johnson, but also check out Son House. For more modern blues rock examples, check out Bonnie Raitt, the Rolling Stones, and the Black Crowes for starters.

LESSON #22:

JAZZIN' UP THE BLUES WITH SUPERIMPOSITION

The blues is a far-reaching style, and it has influenced nearly every genre in Western music. Likewise, each genre assimilates the blues as well, creating sub-genres. One such creation is jazz blues (or blues jazz if you like), in which some of the sophisticated harmonic sensibilities of jazz are infused into the blues language. In this lesson, we'll learn how you can lend a jazzy flavor to your blues solos by using the concept of superimposition.

The Basic Idea

Most blues songs make use of three chords: the I, IV, and V, all of which are often played as dominant chords. In a jazz blues, however, the harmonies are normally a bit more sophisticated. For instance, instead of just moving to the IV chord in measure 5, as is typical in a standard 12-bar, they'll often include a brief ii-V progression leading to that IV chord.

Let's take a blues in C as an example. The I chord would be C or C7, and the IV chord would be F or F7. In a jazz blues, however, measure 4 would often move Gm7 to C7, which is a ii-V progression in the key of F. So it's as though the IV chord is briefly being tonicized.

STANDARD 12-BAR IN C: MEASURES 1-5

CD 1 TRACK 22 0:00

♩ = 116

C7 F7 C7 F7 etc.

I IV I IV

JAZZ BLUES 12-BAR IN C: MEASURES 1-5

CD 1 TRACK 22 0:15

♩ = 116

C7 F7 C7 Gm7 C7 F7 etc.

I IV I — ii - V of IV — IV

You can hear the second example already sounds more sophisticated with only one added chord. Well, even if the rhythm section is playing the standard 12-bar changes, we can superimpose that ii-V of IV sound in measure 4 by targeting certain notes in our solo. That's the basic idea of superimposition.

Licks

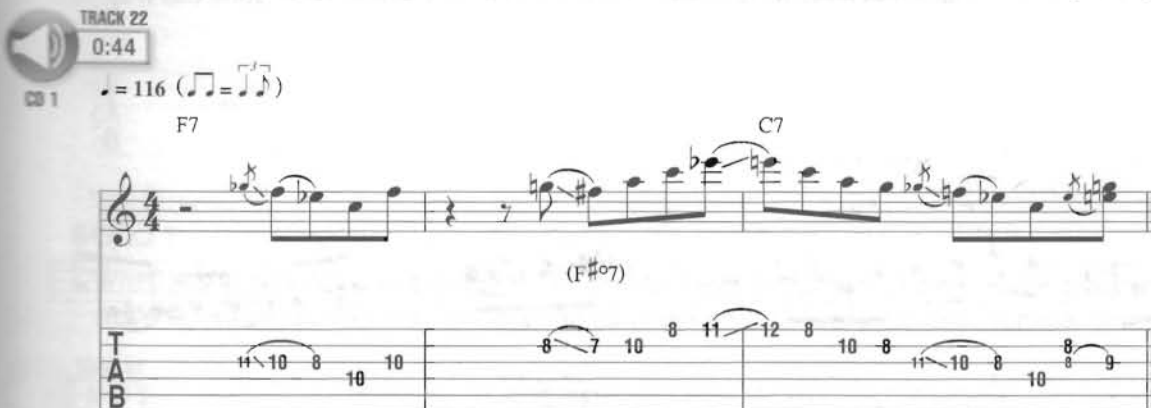
Now let's check out how this sounds. All these examples will be played with a backing track so you can hear them in context. There are several different spots in the 12-bar where different superimpositions can be used, so we'll break them up that way.

MEASURE 4: ii-V OF IV

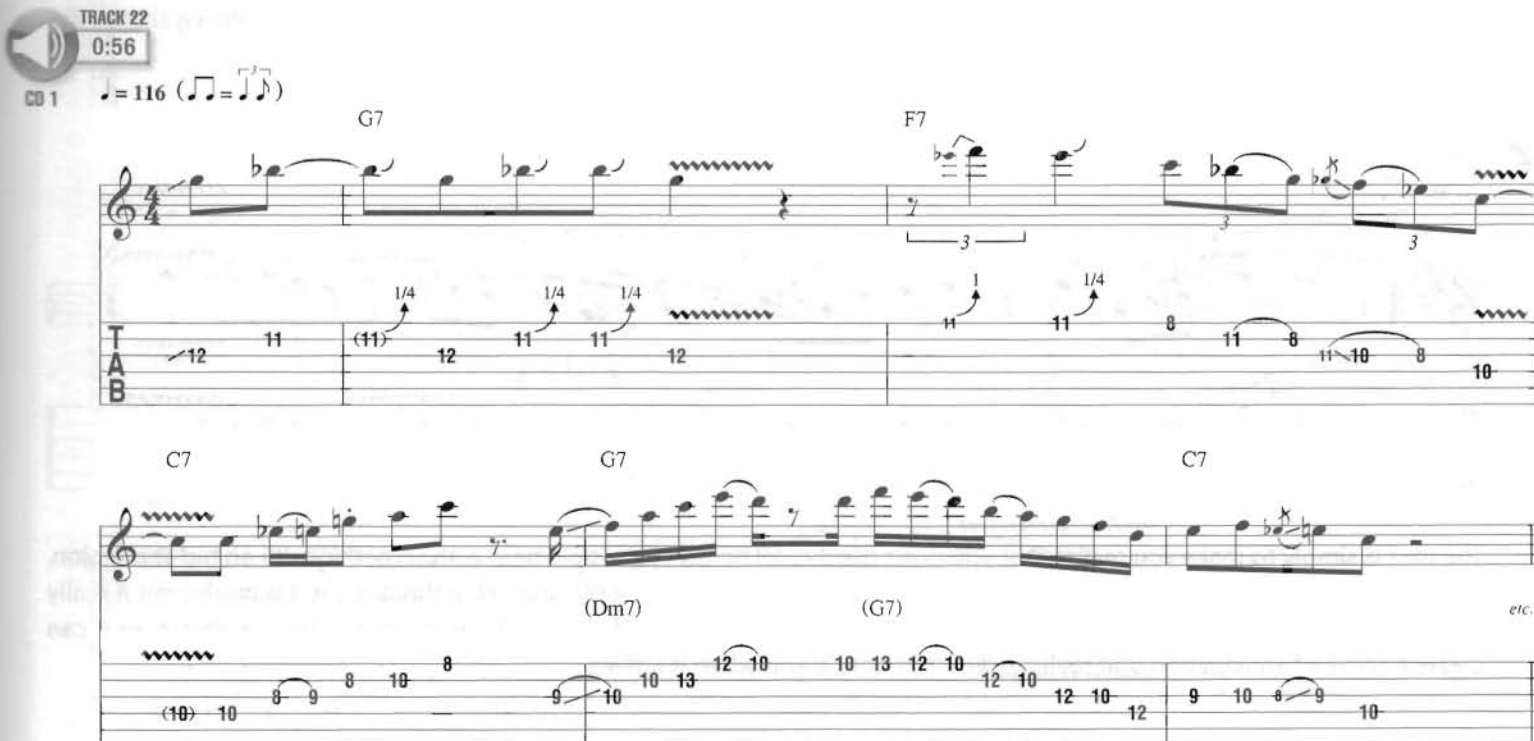
We looked at this spot already. Now let's hear it in action. After some standard lines in measures 1-3 from C minor and major pentatonic, we superimpose the Gm7-C7 sound in measure 4 by simply playing arpeggios for each: D-Bb-G-F for Gm7 and E-C-Bb-G for C7. Notice how we resolve from chord to chord by either half step (from the F of the Gm7 arpeggio to the E of the C7 arpeggio) or whole step (from the G of the C7 arpeggio to A, the 3rd of F). This is an extremely common practice and results in a smooth, connected sound from chord to chord. Also notice the half-step slide into the D note at the beginning of the lick—another extremely common jazz concept.



Another great spot to superimpose, subtly, is in measure 6. Instead of just hanging on F7 for measures 5 and 6, a jazz blues normally moves F7→F#°7 here. You can play notes from an F#°7 arpeggio (F#–A–C–E♭) or notes from the F# diminished scale: F#–G#–A–B–C–D–E♭–F. You have to be a little careful, because it can wear out its welcome. I like to hint at it during the last two beats or so before resolving back to C in measure 7, as demonstrated here. This example begins on measure 5 of the form.



The last spot we'll examine is measure 12. Normally this measure moves to the V chord, but in a jazz blues, there's a ii-V here. In the key of C, this means Dm7-G7. Here's a double-time idea demonstrating that superimposition. We ascend up a Dm9 arpeggio and descend down through a G9 sound. This example picks up at measure 9.



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LESSON #23: USING SPACE AND ALLOWING YOUR PHRASES TO BREATHE

As guitar players, we tend to fill up every second of musical space with something. Even when we're not burning through some scale pattern, we're likely grinding some note into submission with vibrato. But if you listen to great blues soloists—the real story-tellers like B.B. King—you'll find that they often take time with their phrases. They don't cram everything down the listener's throat all within the first 12 measures. In this lesson, we'll talk about strategies that can help you harness this powerful phrasing tool.

Exercises

Let's try a few exercises to get used to this idea.

EXERCISE 1

For this first one, we're simply going to pick a beat and leave it blank each measure. In this example, we've done this with beat 1. Notice that every time beat 1 comes around, there's a rest.



CD 1 ♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩)

A7

EXERCISE 2

In this exercise, we're doing the same thing, except we're moving the rest one beat forward each time. It's on beat 1 in measure 1, beat 2 in measure 2, beat 3 in measure 3, and so on. This will really get you thinking about your phrasing. We've altered the phrase in Example 1 to suit this idea.



CD 1 ♩ = 96 (♩♩ = ♩♩♩)

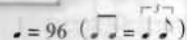
A7

The idea is simply to make you realize that you don't need to fill up every possible beat with something. It's an old expression, but "what you don't play is just as important as what you do play." Many people don't give this a second thought, but it really is true. The space in between your notes can do some great work for you if you just let it. It can bookend a phrase, or it can create a sense of anticipation that really makes that note count when it arrives.

Licks and Solos

Now that you've got the idea, let's check out how space can be put to use in some licks. The idea is to take your time and let phrases end so that others have a place to begin.

LICK 1



SOLO 1

When you're not in a hurry all the time, you also have more time to think about what you're playing, which translates to stepping outside of your old, familiar patterns. Here's a full 12-bar solo over an A minor blues.



Am

The first system of musical notation for 'The Sound of Silence' in 4/4 time. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The melody is written on a single staff. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a half note F#4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, a quarter note B3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note G3. The melody then continues with a quarter note F#3, a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note G2. The melody ends with a quarter note F#2, a quarter note E2, a quarter note D2, a quarter note C2, a quarter note B1, a quarter note A1, and a quarter note G1. The bass line is written on a single staff. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, a half note F#2, a quarter note E2, a quarter note D2, a quarter note C2, a quarter note B1, a quarter note A1, and a quarter note G1. The bass line then continues with a quarter note F#1, a quarter note E1, a quarter note D1, a quarter note C1, a quarter note B0, a quarter note A0, and a quarter note G0. The bass line ends with a quarter note F#0, a quarter note E0, a quarter note D0, a quarter note C0, a quarter note B-1, a quarter note A-1, and a quarter note G-1.

TAB

5 5 4 5 7 5 7 11/12 11/12 10 10 8 10

Dm Am
 (10)
 1 5 8 5 1/4 5 7
 9 12 10 13 12 10 13 10 12 9

[illegible]

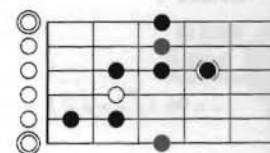
I'm not saying that less is *always* more, but sometimes it really is. Take some time and fool around with this. Slow down and think more about making phrases that count. There's no hurry! Enjoy!

LESSON #24: OPEN-POSITION LICKS IN E

If there's one thing that's in good supply, it's 12-bar blues in the key of E. As a blues guitarist, you're likely to play in this key more than any other, so it's nice to be well-stocked with E-specific licks and riffs. While we can always transpose licks to any key, we can also take advantage of the open strings in the key of E to great effect. This lesson is all about open-position licks in the key of E.

Open-Position E Blues Scale

Let's take a look at the E blues scale in open position, which is what we'll be using for the majority of these licks. Notice that the B note in the upper octave is shown in two places: on the open B string and on fret 4 of the G string. Both are commonly used in these types of licks.



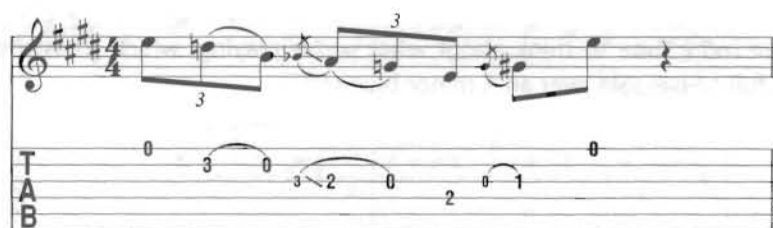
Licks

LICK 1

Our first lick makes use of two common elements: a grace-note slur from the ♭5th (B♭) to the 4th (A) followed by a pull-off to the ♭3rd (open G string), and the minor-to-major 3rd hammer-on (open G to G#). I like to play this one fingerstyle, so I can really snap the strings, but it works nicely with a pick as well.



♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

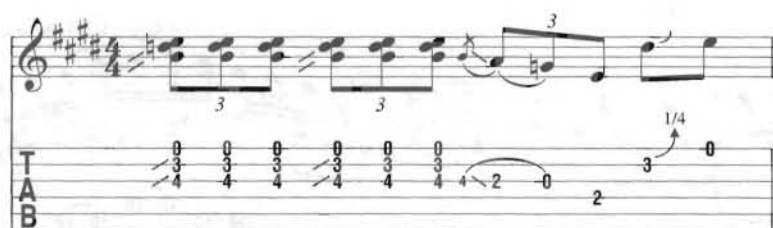


LICK 2

This one kicks off with an incredibly familiar sound. The B/D♯ dyad is slid into underneath the open high E string to form the dense, ubiquitous triple-stop of B/D/E. A surprise shift in register at the end takes us back up to the D note, to which we apply a bluesy half-step bend, before finishing it off with the high E note. Consequently, this type of lick could be looped several times.



♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

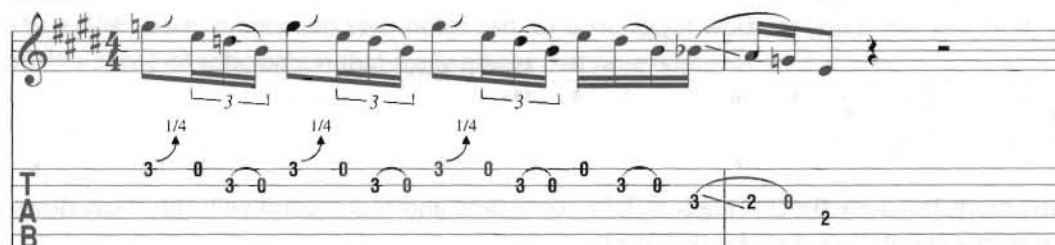


LICK 3

Here's a speedy lick that releases the tension created by a repeated pull-off lick with a run down the blues scale.



♩ = 100



LICK 4

The low register is exploited here in typical Stevie Ray-style. After a climb straight up the blues scale, we begin descending with a grace-note hammer-on to the tonic E from the $\flat 7$ th, D. The grace-note pull-off from $B\flat$ on string 5 to the open A string at the beginning of measure 2 is a favorite move of Stevie's.

TRACK 24

0:23

$\text{♩} = 88$

LICK 5

Here's one that you can groove on for a while. It's a shuffle pattern that alternates ending on the two most common trills in the key of E: from the $\flat 7$ th ($D\sharp$) to the tonic (E) on string 4, and from the minor 3rd (G) to the major 3rd ($G\sharp$) on string 3. Hendrix did this kind of thing all the time.

TRACK 24

0:34

$\text{♩} = 88$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

LICK 6

This final example sounds great moving from the IV chord (A, in this case) back to the I, since it begins by outlining an A arpeggio on strings 5–3. After that, we see a variation on the descent from Lick 4 that adds one note to the grace-note $B\flat$ –A pull-off figure. Here, instead of just quickly pulling off from $B\flat$ to A, we're hammering on from A to $B\flat$ and then pulling off to A. This all happens very quickly of course and should only take the space of one 8th-note triplet.

TRACK 24

0:51

$\text{♩} = 84$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

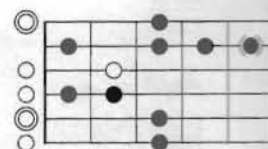
Remember that you can create lots of new licks by combining different parts of these licks in various combinations. That's often how many players build such a huge catalog of licks. If you break them down, you'll see that they're made up of smaller fragments that can be found elsewhere as well. Enjoy!

LESSON #25: OPEN-POSITION LICKS IN A

With A being such a popular blues guitar key, and so many open strings available to us in that key, it makes sense to build a stockpile of licks in A that exploit the open position. While this approach is commonplace in the key of E, it's not as frequently done in A for some reason. In this lesson, we hope to remedy that by learning some open-position licks in the key of A.

Open-Position A Blues Scale

Let's take a look at the A blues scale in open position, which is what we'll be using for the majority of these licks. Notice that the E note in the upper octave is shown in two places: on the open high E string and on fret 5 of the B string. Both are commonly used in these types of licks.



Licks

Our first two licks exploit the unison E notes on the top two strings. Though this is commonly used in the key of E, where it functions as the tonic, it's not as often done in the key of A, where it functions as the 5th. These two licks demonstrate a few ways we can use this somewhat unique sound to our advantage.

LICK 1

TRACK 25
0:00
CD 1

♩ = 72

LICK 2

TRACK 25
0:10
CD 1

♩ = 126

LICK 3

Here's one that works the lower register of the scale and includes a characteristic grace-note pull-off from the $\flat 5$ th (E \flat) to the 4th (open D string). Notice also how we cap it off by sliding up into the 3rd/ $\flat 7$ th double stop of C \sharp /G \flat from a half step below. Remember to allow the open A string to ring beneath it.

TRACK 25
0:19
CD 1

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩♩)

LICK 4

This is a nice boogie lick in A minor that you can groove on for a while, adding fills like the one in measure 4 to keep things interesting. While the first-finger barre is normally used for the A5 in these types of boogie riffs, you'll most likely find that the Am style fingering (with fingers 2 and 3 on strings 4 and 3, respectively) works better here because of the C note that's fretted on string 2, fret 1 each time.

TRACK 25

0:29

CD 1

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♩)

A5

LICK 5

Here's one that uses the high E string as a drone on top of a descending blues scale melody. Again, the fact that this drone is the 5th, as opposed to the tonic in an E lick, lends a unique quality that's not exploited enough in my opinion. I use hybrid picking for this one, but you could play it totally fingerstyle as well.

TRACK 25

0:51

CD 1

♩ = 66 (♩ = ♩)

LICK 6

We'll end with another groove lick that's played fingerstyle and features some right-hand independence. While keeping steady quarter notes on the open A string, we play a bluesy melody on the top three strings and answer it with a lower register fill (which also acts as the intro). Notice that the F# note (fret 2, string 1) is not part of the A blues scale. It's the 6th, which is a bit brighter sounding, but it's a great sound.

TRACK 25

1:02

CD 1

♩ = 100

Remember that you can combine different parts of these in various combinations to create lots of new licks. Maybe take the notes of one lick with the rhythmic approach of the other. Or combine the first half of one with the second half of the other, etc. By doing this, you'll have a huge catalog of licks before you know it. Enjoy!

LESSON #26:

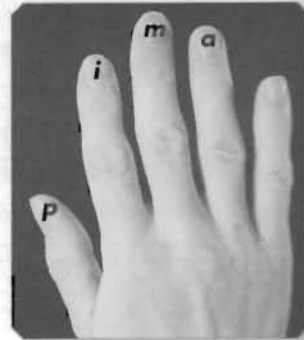
BASIC ACOUSTIC FINGERSTYLE BLUES

Playing fingerstyle blues on acoustic sounds about as authentic as you can get. It harkens back to the original Delta blues of the twenties and thirties, when the music was young, dangerous, and exciting. Though the electric guitar has certainly established its own enduring legacy in the blues genre, there's nothing like the rootsy sound of bare fingers on a steel-string acoustic. In this lesson, we'll look at the basics of acoustic fingerstyle blues.

The Plucking Hand

The original Delta blues guitarists used a variety of plucking techniques. Some strummed everything with their thumb (or a thumbpick), some used multiple fingers together, some used their thumb and first finger only, etc. There's really no single "right" way to do it. If it sounded good, that's what they used. And that's still the basis for the technique today. So, while in this lesson I'll supply the right-hand fingerings that work best for me, feel free to experiment in this regard.

The fingers of the plucking hand will be labeled as follows: *p* for thumb, *i* for index, *m* for middle, and *a* for ring finger. These labels are derived from the classical guitar tradition, but they're also widespread in other genres of fingerstyle playing, so we'll use them too.



Exercises

If you're completely new to fingerstyle, you'll want to start with a few exercises to get a feel for it. Though acoustic fingerstyle blues often makes use of alternate tunings (especially when the slide is involved), we'll remain in standard tuning throughout this lesson for simplicity's sake.

EXERCISE 1

Let's start by playing an E blues scale in open position. Use your thumb for the lower strings and your fingers for the higher strings.

CD 1 TRACK 26 0:00

♩ = 80

TAB

EXERCISE 2

Now let's try alternating our thumb and fingers. We'll pluck down for the notes of the scale with our fingers and pluck the open low E string with our thumb. Try to make sure you're only plucking one string at a time.

CD 1 TRACK 26 0:18

♩ = 80

TAB



EXERCISE 3

Finally, we'll do the same thing, but we'll pluck the bass notes and treble notes together at the same time. Picking a bass note with the thumb and treble note with the finger simultaneously like this is sometimes called "pinching."

Riffs

RIFF 1

This first riff is in the key of E and again works the low E drone beneath a melody on top. Note that we include the hammer to the major 3rd (G#) from the minor 3rd (G), which is an incredibly common move. The final note of the melody is E on the fourth string, which, though the bottom three strings are commonly plucked by the thumb, needs to be handled by a finger since the thumb is plucking string 6.



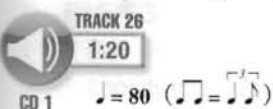
RIFF 2

Here's another one in E that raises the level of difficulty. Notice that we're plucking an 8th note in the melody during the second measure. Your thumb, however, maintains steady quarter notes on the open low E. Make sure that these two rhythms are distinct. We're also adding a quarter-step bend on the high G# note.



RIFF 3

Our final example is in the key of G—another common fingerstyle key—and raises the difficulty just a bit more. After keeping a steady, fretted, quarter-note G bass beneath a fairly busy melody on top, we bounce the thumb back and forth between string 6 and string 4 in measure 2. This is an extremely common maneuver in fingerstyle, and you're certain to see more of it in your fingerstyle studies.



LESSON #27:

INTERMEDIATE ACOUSTIC FINGERSTYLE BLUES

Playing acoustic fingerstyle blues can be an incredibly satisfying experience. You've got everything you need to make a complete blues statement at your fingertips, whether you choose to croon or not. In this lesson, we'll look at some intermediate techniques for acoustic fingerstyle blues, and we'll learn some nice riffs in the process.

Right-Hand Independence

One of the most difficult aspects of this style can be the independence needed in the plucking hand. Often times, your thumb will be required to play different rhythms than your fingers, which can take some getting used to if you haven't done it before. Let's take a look at a few exercises that work this area.

EXERCISE 1

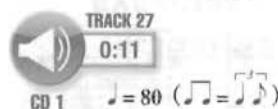
This first one keeps a steady low E string going beneath a melody on top containing some 8th notes. Make sure your thumb doesn't imitate the rhythm of the melody. It should be playing straight quarter notes on string 6.



w/ fingers
let ring throughout

EXERCISE 2

Less frequent is the opposite idea—quarter notes on the top strings with a bass note melody below—but it does happen occasionally, and it's a really great sound. Here's that idea in E, using the high E string as our drone on top.



w/ fingers
let ring throughout

EXERCISE 3

Other times, you may time a thumb-plucked bass note with a note that's hammered on above. This is a unique coordination that's actually used quite a bit. Here's a basic example in E.



w/ fingers
let ring throughout

Alternating Thumb

Another common technique in this style is the alternating thumb. While playing melodies or chords on top, the thumb will often bounce back and forth between two strings—usually strings 6 and 4 or strings 5 and 4. Depending on the chord form being used, the bass is usually bouncing between octaves, between the root and 5th of a chord, or between the root and 3rd of a chord. Occasionally, it will get even more involved.

EXERCISE 4

Here's a basic example where we're alternating between the open low E string and an octave above on string 4 while playing a melody on top.



TRACK 27

0:33

$\text{♩} = 100$ ($\text{♩} \text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

Musical notation for the first system of 'The Wind'. It features a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Below the staff, the text 'w/ fingers' and 'let ring throughout' is written.

w/ fingers
 let ring throughout

TAB notation for the first system of 'The Wind'. It shows a six-string guitar layout with fret numbers: 0, 3, 0, 1, 2, 2.

TAB

RIFF 1

Now let's check out a few riffs that make use of these ideas. This first one, in E, uses a good bit of independence in the right hand and finishes off with the 5th-6th boogie pattern strummed by the thumb on strings 6 and 5. Notice that, because the pattern starts on beat 2, the 6th dyad (E/C#) is first.



TRACK 27

0:49

♩ = 84 (♩♩ = ♩♩)

Musical notation for the first system of 'The Wind'. It features a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a triplet of eighth notes. Below the staff, the instruction 'w/ fingers let ring throughout' is written. To the right, 'P.M.' is indicated with a dashed line.

TAB notation for the first system of 'The Wind'. It shows fret numbers 0, 3, 4, 4, 4, 2, 0, 2, 0, 1, 0, 0, 4, 4, 2, 2, 4, 4.

P.M. -----

RIFF 2

Here's a nice one in A that bumps along with an alternating bassline moving between strings 5 and 4. The notes on top mix chord and melody sensibilities to provide a well-rounded sound.



TRACK 27

1:07

♩ = 120 (♩♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩♩♩}}^3$)

w/ fingers

TAB

5 3 2 2 5 2 3 2

0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2

RIFF 3

Our final riff is in G and combines a bassline that alternates between strings 6 and 4 with a part on top consisting of dyad chords (beat 2) and a single-note melody, both of which are derived from the G minor pentatonic scale. For extra credit, make the first of the repeated dyads staccato (as it sounds on the audio) while leaving the bass note normal.



TRACK 27

1:20

$\text{♩} = \text{♩♩}$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

The first system of musical notation for 'The Wind' is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G, a quarter note A, and a quarter note B. This is followed by a half note C, a half note D, and a half note E. The melody then continues with a quarter note F#, a quarter note G, a quarter note A, and a quarter note B. The system concludes with a quarter note C, a quarter note D, and a quarter note E. The notation includes a double bar line and repeat signs.

LESSON #28:

ADVANCED ACOUSTIC FINGERSTYLE BLUES

The fingerstyle technique employed by the Delta blues masters of the first half of the century varied considerably from player to player, creating a vast repertoire of unique ideas from which to draw when reinterpreting the blues of today. This means combining several aspects of technique in interesting ways. In this lesson, we'll be doing just that as we examine advanced acoustic fingerstyle blues.

Right-Hand Independence

One of the most important skills to master in the fingerstyle world—blues included—is independence in the plucking hand. Often times, your thumb will be required to play different rhythms than your fingers, which can take some getting used to if you've not done it before. Let's begin with a few exercises to work specifically on this concept.

EXERCISE 1

This first one is in A and maintains a steady quarter-note bass on the open A string while plucking dyads on the top two strings in various rhythms. Make sure your thumb is not varying from the quarter-note pulse; it should be automatic.



♩ = 124 (♩ = ♪ ♪)
A7

w/ fingers

TAB: T (fingerings: 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2), A (0), B (0)

EXERCISE 2

This next exercise expands on the previous idea. Now we're alternating a root-5th bassline on strings 5 and 4 and playing a two-note arpeggio (G₄-C₅) on top that lasts for three 8th notes. This puts the beginning of the arpeggio pattern on the beat the first time, off the beat the second time, on the beat the third time, and so on.



♩ = 124 (♩ = ♪ ♪)
A7

w/ fingers

TAB: T (fingerings: 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2), A (2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0), B (0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2)

EXERCISE 3

Here, we're flopping things on end with an example in E. Chords are played once on each beat with the fingers, while the thumb plays a melody from E minor pentatonic on the low strings. To make things more interesting, we're employing grace-note hammer-ons for the first beat in each measure. Notice, however, that these move between the chords and bassline.



♩ = 80 (♩ = ♪ ♪)
E

w/ fingers

TAB: T (fingerings: 0 1 0 1 0 1 0 1), A (0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2), B (0 3 0 3 0 3 0 3)

Riffs

All right, now let's check out some riffs.

RIFF 1

This first one is an alternating thumb tour de force in E that makes use of a few quarter-step bends in the melody to help provide the illusion of two different instruments. Notice also that, on beat 3 of measure 2, we're timing a hammer-on with a thumb-plucked bass note. This can be tricky if you're not used to it, so be sure you're getting it cleanly.

TRACK 28

0:37

CD 1

♩ = 140 (♩ = ♯♩)
E7

w/ fingers
1/4
1/4

RIFF 2

Here's more of a down-home example in E that functions as a turnaround. We're thumping a monotonic bass note in measure 1 while performing the fairly busy melody on top. We're also applying a slight palm mute to the low E string to help set the bass and treble apart.

TRACK 28

0:48

CD 1

♩ = 88 (♩ = ♯♩)
E7

*P.M.
w/ fingers
C9 B9 E
*Slight P.M. on 6th str. throughout.

RIFF 3

Our final example in A moves chromatically descending chords on strings 4–2 with a common A pedal tone on string 1 and open A string bass beneath. Note that the thumb is alternating here between strings 5 and 4 throughout, but the notes on string 4 change, so the effect is not as noticeable. We end with a lick from the A blues scale, all while maintaining the alternating bass.

TRACK 28

0:59

CD 1

♩ = 110

w/ fingers
let ring throughout
A7 A7 Dm6/A A7

This is a fascinating style that's fun and challenging. Be sure to check out the work of the Delta masters as well as some modern practitioners to hear what can really be done.

LESSON #29: STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN STYLE

One of the true giants of blues guitar, Stevie Ray Vaughan was largely responsible for the blues revival of the eighties that's continued to this day. He's received nothing but the highest accolades from elder bluesmen like Albert King, and his star shines just as brightly as it did when he passed away over 20 years ago. In this lesson, we'll examine the Stevie Ray Vaughan style and see what made him the legend that he is.

Rhythm Parts

Stevie's rhythmic feel was unerring with a deep swing and a groove large enough to house a 747, and his guitar was often the engine that drove his tunes. Though he played many standard blues rhythm patterns, he updated them with a serious dose of attitude.

BOOGIE PATTERNS

Take this standard boogie bassline pattern, for example. Stevie would employ a liberal amount of fret-hand muting so that only the intended note was allowed to ring. This allowed him to strum through all six strings with the pick hand, adding serious weight to every note. Listen to the audio to hear the difference it makes.



TRACK 29

0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 119 (♩♩ = ♩♩♩)

N.C.(E)

TAB

0 0 3 4 2 2 4 4 | 2 2 3 4 2 2 4 2

FUNKY PARTS

Stevie could also get good and funky as well. Sometimes he'd play something busy that mixed chordal playing with single notes. He'd often work out of the E-form barre chord shape for this type of thing. Again, fret-hand muting is crucial here so that you can strum freely without hitting extra notes.



TRACK 29

0:09

CD 1 = 110

N.C.(D)

Lead Playing

Stevie was one of the most exciting and visceral soloists in all the blues, and he put his whole body into just about every note he played. Let's take a look at some of his favorite phrases.

MINOR PENTATONIC LICKS

Vaughan spent most of his time in the good ol' minor pentatonic box. Here's a typical phrase in A that he might play over a shuffle.

TRACK 29
0:23

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

Like most blues players, he was a string-bending fool, as evidenced by this phrase in D.

TRACK 29
0:32

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 90$

OPEN-POSITION LICKS

Stevie was also a monster in open position as well. These licks were almost always in the key of E. He could really burn it up down there with things like this.

TRACK 29
0:42

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 134$

SPECIAL TRICKS

SRV was quite a showman as well, and he kept a few tricks up his sleeve. In this final lick, we'll check out two of them: the pickup switch and the octave drop. First, after starting with the neck pickup, we quickly switch to the bridge pickup after bending the high G note, which really makes it come alive. Then we quickly slide down an octave for the bend on the G string, which is a serious attention-grabber.

TRACK 29
0:49

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 100$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

*Switch from neck to bridge pickup.

LESSON #30: T-BONE WALKER STYLE

The influence of Aaron "T-Bone" Walker on the blues guitar world is incalculable. Nearly every blues guitarist under the sun, from B.B. King to the ten-year old next door who just learned his first blues scale, has been affected by his playing whether they know it or not. In this lesson, we're going to look at some of his favorite devices and learn some great T-Bone-style licks in the process.

Equipment

T-Bone spent most of his career playing Gibson archtops. He started out on an ES-250 and then moved to an ES-5, which was reputedly wired out of phase, some time in the fifties. In the early days, he's said to have plugged into the workhorse Gibson EH-150 amp, but by the fifties he was usually plugging into a Fender tweed Bassman.

Rhythm Style

T-Bone, like his contemporary Charlie Christian, was a bridge between the worlds of jazz and blues guitar. While Charlie resided more toward the jazz side, T-Bone migrated more toward the blues; their playing shared much in common, however, due to the popular music of the times. Because of this, T-Bone had a nice chord vocabulary.

SLOW BLUES: CHROMATIC NINTH CHORDS

In slow blues settings, as in his signature song "Call It Stormy Monday," he would make extensive use of extended chords—predominantly ninth chords—often approaching them from a half step below or above. Here's an example of this approach in G.

TRACK 30
0:00
CD 1 ♩ = 56

A^b9 G9 B9 C9

Chord	T	A	B
A ^b 9	4	3	3
G9	3	2	2
B9	2	2	1
C9	3	2	3

THE SIXTH CHORD/NINTH CHORD MOVE

Another one of T-Bone's favorite chord moves, which he would make use in slow blues or moderate shuffles, is the sliding sixth-to-ninth chord move.

TRACK 30
0:17
CD 1 ♩ = 84 (♩ = ♩)

G6 G9 C6 C9

Chord	T	A	B
G6	3	5	3
G9	2	4	2
C6	8	10	8
C9	7	9	7

AUGMENTED INTRO

Another T-Bone staple was the augmented chord intro. He'd usually arpeggiate a voicing based on a fifth-string root in rubato fashion and then cue the band for the entrance.

TRACK 30
0:29
CD 1 ♩ = 56

E⁺ A9

let ring -----

Chord	T	A	B
E ⁺	5	5	5
A9	5	4	4

Lead Style

What really set T-Bone apart from his contemporaries was his horn-like single-note phrasing, rivaled at the time only by Charlie Christian. Let's take a look at some of his favorite licks and tricks.

BOX-POSITION BLUES LICKS

T-Bone spent much of his time working out of the minor pentatonic or blues box shape, often employing full-, half-, and quarter-step bends to color his phrases. Here's a typical line in A. Notice also the mixture of straight and swung rhythms—another trademark.

ADDED NOTES

T-Bone would also constantly add notes to the blues scale to create a composite blues scale. His favorite added tones were the major 3rd, the 6th, and the 9th. Here's a characteristic phrase in G including those added tones.

Here's one in C that demonstrates his revolutionary (for the time) horn-like phrasing. This one combines notes from C Mixolydian and the C blues scale.

RHYTHMIC RIFFS

Chuck Berry nicked more than a few tricks from T-Bone, and one of them was the repetitive, rhythmic riff style. T-Bone loved to play around with rhythm, and it's evident in licks like this one in C.



CD 1

♩ = 84 (♩♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩♩}}^{\text{♩}}$)

The first staff of music is in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 4/4 time. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (D4, E4, F#4), another triplet of eighth notes (G#4, A4, B4), and a quarter note (C5). The final measure contains a half note (B4) and a whole rest.



CD 1

♩ = 84 (♩♩ = ♩♩♩)

The first staff of music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with triplets indicated by a '3' over the notes. The staff ends with a quarter rest.



CD 1

♩ = 160 (♩♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩♩}}^3$)



CD 1

♩ = 160 (♩♩ = ♩♩)

That'll do it for our tour of the T-Bone style. Please listen to the man himself to hear these ideas presented authentically as they should be. (I don't have an archtop guitar, unfortunately!) Enjoy!

LESSON #31: B.B. KING STYLE

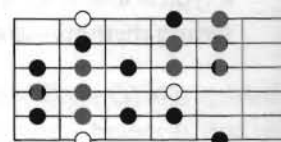
B.B. King's contributions to the blues are enormous. With one of the most influential voices on the electric guitar and one of the great blues singing voices of all time to match, the king of the blues is truly a living legend. He's a walking treasure that carries with him all that makes the blues tradition what it is today. In this lesson, we'll examine B.B. King's style and how he makes his famous guitar "Lucille" cry the way she does.

Lead Style

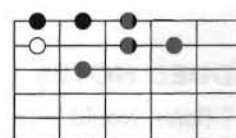
The heart of King's playing is his inimitable single-note style, which has captivated listeners for over six decades. Let's take a look at some of his trademarks.

SCALE FORMS

B.B. works predominantly out of two different positions for most of his lead playing. One is the standard box position, which is based on the E-form barre chord. In this position, B.B. will make use of both the minor pentatonic and the parallel major pentatonic, as well as the $\flat 5$ th blue note, combining them into a composite blues scale that looks like this:



Then, of course, there's the "B.B. box," so named because of the signature phrases he plays there. When playing in this form, B.B. rarely strays below the third string. Note that this form also blends notes from the major and minor pentatonic and includes the $\flat 5$ th.



VIBRATO

B.B.'s trademark "hummingbird" vibrato is one of his most identifiable traits. It's almost always applied with his first finger. To create the motion, he allows the thumb to come off the back of the neck and rotates his forearm and wrist, as if turning a door knob, so that the only finger making contact with the guitar is the first.



STRING BENDING

B.B. is one of the true masters of string bending and regularly employs them in varying degrees of pitch—from a quarter step to 1 1/2 steps and more—with fluency and accuracy. We'll see plenty of these in the following licks.

LICK 1

Here's a classic intro phrase that he might play in a slow blues. Notice the major pentatonic pickup phrase, the gradual bend from the 2nd up to the major 3rd on string 1, and the minor pentatonic phrase to end.

CD 1 **TRACK 31**
0:00

$\text{♩} = 56$

C7

grad. bend

T 8 10 8 10 8 8 10 8 10

A

B

LICK 2

Here's a moderate shuffle phrase out of the B.B. box in A. Notice how the 2nd (B) is bent first a whole step and then up another half step. The high 5th (E) on string 1 is bent up a whole step to again reach the 6th—another B.B. classic move. Other trademark moves include the fast hammer/pull move and the hummingbird vibrato.

TRACK 31

0:10

CD 1

♩ = 100 (♩ = ♩)

LICK 3

B.B. would also use a unison slide to move into the extended box position, where he would often again engage in major/minor mixing mayhem, as in this C lick.

TRACK 31

0:21

CD 1

♩ = 56

LICK 4

T-Bone Walker's influence can be heard in B.B.'s longer 8th-note based lines, which he would whip out in more upbeat shuffles. Here's one such lick in C. Note the characteristic slide from Bb to E and the fluid 8th-note phrase in measures 3–4.

TRACK 31

0:33

CD 1

♩ = 160 (♩ = ♩)

LICK 5

Our final lick leaves us with one last B.B.-ism: the "octave yelp." After a short phrase in the B.B., box, use your pinky to fret the high A and deliberately rake up to it.

TRACK 31

0:44

CD 1

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♩)

LESSON #32: ALBERT KING STYLE

As one-third of the "Three Kings" of the blues, Albert King was perhaps the most daunting. Not only was he a large man, but his style was so unorthodox that it literally made copping his licks a near impossibility. In this lesson, we'll take a look at the Albert King style and how he made such an indelible mark in the history of blues guitar.

Equipment and Technique

There wasn't anything traditional about the way Albert King played blues guitar. His instrument of choice, the Gibson Flying V, was hardly blues-approved, and, beyond the mid-sixties, he most commonly plugged into solid state amps, such as the Acoustic 270. And that's the most normal part of his sound.

Albert was left-handed, but he played right-handed guitars. He simply turned them over so that the thicker strings were on the bottom instead of the top. He plucked nearly all his notes with the thumb and used an alternate tuning of, usually (low to high) C-F-C-F-A-D—or sometimes even a half step lower than that. Note that the top four strings are down a full step from standard tuning, and the bottom two are down two steps, although he rarely ever played them.

Scale Forms: The Myth of the "Albert King Box"

Albert's solos are almost entirely made up from the minor pentatonic scale (or blues scale). You often hear the minor pentatonic extension box being referred to as the "Albert King box," because it was believed that he played many of his licks in that position. Here's this extension box in C minor pentatonic:



However, this is not how Albert did it. In fact, he played most of those licks from the standard box position; he just *bent the hell* out of the strings. Instead of bending from the 4th (F) on fret 13 up a whole step to the 5th (G), for example, Albert would bend from the 3rd (E) on fret 11 up *two whole steps* to the G. When you hear the pitch distinctly bending from the 4th to the 5th, he's pre-bending the E_b up a whole step, then plucking it and bending it up another whole step. All of this can be verified by watching videos of him playing, which are readily available online now.



So, instead of playing a lick like this:

He would actually play it like this:

The problem? It's *really* hard and uncomfortable to do this. Albert had massive hands (he made the guitar look tiny), and the fact that he tuned down would've helped as well. Pulling the strings down to bend, as opposed to fighting gravity, may have aided as well. In fact, almost all of Albert licks were fingered in non-traditional ways. At any rate, since few, if any, players make use of Albert's setup and technique, we'll arrange the licks for play on a standard guitar, which means adjusting the position to the misnamed "Albert" box when necessary. On the audio, I played all of these fingerstyle to help emulate Albert's sound.

LICK 1

This first one is a classic, slow blues lick in A. We remain in eighth position until the G note on beat 4. This means the 8th fret is bent up a whole step with our first finger. This is the way Stevie Ray often adapted Albert's licks.



LICK 2

Here's one that he might play in a straight-8ths, R&B groove. This one is played from the minor pentatonic box, although, again, Albert didn't play it this way. He moved into a lower position for the descent.

TRACK 32

0:33

CD 1

♩ = 80

LICK 3

Here's another take on the previous idea, this time in C# minor pentatonic.

TRACK 32

0:44

CD 1

♩ = 88

LICK 4

Interestingly, Albert most often played over either straight-8th R&B grooves or slow blues tunes. In a slow blues, Albert spent most of his time filling in the spaces between the vocals. Here's another telling example of the latter in the key of E.

TRACK 32

0:54

CD 1

♩ = 56

LICK 5

Let's close out with one more slow blues lick that Albert would have used as an intro. This one's in C and hints at Albert's multi-pitched bending.

TRACK 32

1:05

CD 1

♩ = 56

That's gonna do it for this lesson. Albert left us too soon, but he left behind a vast catalog of blues classics, so be sure to listen to his original recordings to hear how it's really done.

BACK 33



TRACK 33
0:24

CD 1

$\bullet = 104$

is a Peter Green-inspired line in C minor that makes
intonation on those pre-bends.



TRACK 33
0:32

CD 1

♩ = 104

TAB

clusively at times or combining it with the minor
the key of A—something you'd hear Slowhand do.
e note, B \flat , is present, as well as the 6th, C \sharp . It draws



TRACK 33
0:42

CO 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♩}$)

blues greats, including Clapton, Peter Green, Gary
the masters.

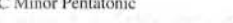
LESSON #34:

Many blues players can tear up the minor pentatonic scale like no one's business, but they fail to assimilate other sounds **into** their playing. This can result in a one-dimensional sound or, in worst cases, a serious rut that eventually burns the player **out**. In this lesson, we're going to talk about a simple strategy to help avoid pentatonic burnout: incorporating the major 3rd. You hear this idea in the playing of T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and countless others.

The Basic Idea

The minor pentatonic scale contains the root, ♭3rd, 4th, 5th, and ♭7th of the key. In C, for example, this would be the notes C, E♭, F, G, and B♭. However, the blues is usually based on dominant harmonies, which contain major 3rds. A C7, for example, which would be the tonic chord in a C blues, is spelled C–E–G–B♭.

C Minor Pentatonic



1 b3 4 5 b7
C Eb F G Bb

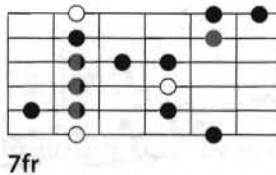
C7 Chord



1 3 5 b7
C E G Bb

Therefore, to provide a different color in our lines, we can add that major 3rd note to our minor pentatonic scale. If we were to create a scale form using this idea, we might come up with this, which is based off the standard box shape.

C MINOR PENTATONIC WITH ADDED MAJOR 3RD



LICK 1

One of the most classic uses of this note is the ascending tonic arpeggio, as demonstrated here. Notice that the major 3rd is hammered onto from the minor 3rd (E \flat), which helps lend a bluesy edge to the brightness of the note.

CD 1 **TRACK 34**
0:00
♩ = 96 (♩♩ = $\overbrace{\text{♩♩}}^{\text{♩}}$)
C7

[illegible]

LICK 2

This lick would begin in measure 3 of a 12-bar form. The minor 3rd dyad shape of E/G, which functions as the major 3rd and 5th of C, respectively, is slid up three frets to G/B \flat , which functions as the 5th and \flat 7th of C, respectively. The E \flat that we hit squarely on the downbeat of the last measure highlights the F7 harmony, where it functions as the \flat 7th of F.

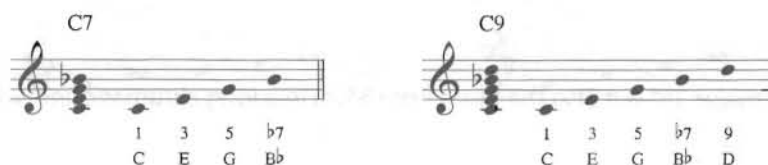
TRACK 34
0:08
CD 1

LESSON #35: INCORPORATING THE 9TH

There's nothing wrong with the good ol' minor pentatonic scale, and many players have spent their entire career successfully mining it for blues gold. However, if you're in search of a way to broaden your soloing palette, it may be time to step outside the box. There are a number of notes we can add to the pentatonic scale in this regard. In this lesson, we'll look at how to incorporate the 9th for a slightly more sophisticated sound.

What's the 9th?

The 9th is actually the same note as the 2nd in any given key. It's commonly named the 9th because of the fact that it functions like an extension of the dominant seventh harmony. While a dominant seventh chord contains a root, 3rd, 5th, and b7th, a dominant ninth chord continues the process by adding one more note on top: the 9th. Since this note is seen as extending beyond the octave, it's labeled as a 9th instead of a 2nd.

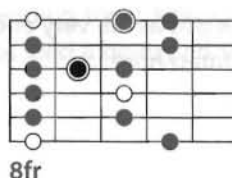


How It's Used

The 9th is usually played in higher registers on the instrument, since it can tend to be a bit muddy in the lower end. This roughly translates to usually avoiding it on the bottom two strings. This is hardly a rule, but it's traditionally used in the upper octaves.

If you know the major pentatonic scale and have played it much, then you've no doubt used the 9th, because it's part of that scale. However, the major pentatonic doesn't include the b7th, which is a huge part of the blues sound. So, we're going to form a hybrid scale pattern that's minor pentatonic on bottom, but includes the major 3rd and 9th in the higher octaves. These added tones (the major 3rd and 9th) are shown as circled dots on the diagram. In the key of C, it would look like this:

C MINOR PENTATONIC HYBRID SCALE



Again, there are no rules that say you can't add these notes to the lower octaves as well. We're just working with this pattern because it's the one most commonly used, and it helps ease into the idea, because it's not all that difficult to add one or two notes. (It should be mentioned that we add the b5th note from the blues scale occasionally to these licks as well.)

Adding the 9th will provide a bit of a jazzier sound, and this concept was used often in the forties and fifties by players like T-Bone Walker and B.B. King, when blues and jazz were much more closely intertwined. Therefore, it may not be something you'll want to use constantly. But it can really expand your sound if you're so inclined. Now that we've got a grip on the notes at hand (so to speak), let's check out how we can use them.

LICK 1

In this first example, we accent the D at the beginning of a descending line that resolves to the major 3rd at the end. Notice that, though the 9th is only used once, it colors the entire line.

TRACK 35
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 96 (♩ = ♩♩)
C7

LICK 2

Here's one where the 9th is featured throughout with a common hammer/pull move involving the root and 9th. This is a good one for building up momentum. Again, we descend afterward and resolve on the major 3rd.

TRACK 35

0:08

CD 1

♩ = 126 (♩ = ♪)

C7

LICK 3

Here's a very T-Bone-sounding lick that makes singular use of the hammer/pull move from the last lick. Here, though, it's a much quicker move and is therefore a bit more subtle.

TRACK 35

0:17

CD 1

♩ = 100 (♩ = ♪)

C7

LICK 4

This lick is the jazziest of them all. We begin with syncopated stabs on a tritone double stop (B \flat and E), which suggests C7. In measure 2, we descend straight down a C9 arpeggio from the 9th: D-B \flat -G-E-C-B \flat -G. We finish off with a blues scale riff-type phrase that resolves on the tonic.

TRACK 35

0:24

CD 1

♩ = 148 (♩ = ♪)

C7

LICK 5

This final lick has a bit of a T-Bone flair as well. Notice that we draw attention to the 9th at the top of the lick by gracing into it twice. The end features a nice "cram" of five notes to the beat.

TRACK 35

0:34

CD 1

♩ = 96 (♩ = ♪)

C7

LESSON #36:

SOLOING STRATEGIES FOR THE I CHORD

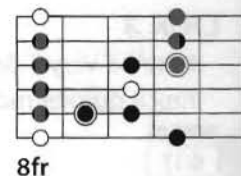
The blues is unique in that it normally consists of all dominant chords. This, combined with the fact that there is still a strong sense of one tonality, requires that the soloist sometimes employ different soloing strategies for each chord. Some licks that work great for the I chord don't sound as good over the IV chord. Other licks are tailor-made for the V chord, etc. In this lesson, we'll look at some soloing strategies for the I chord and see how they can be put to use in several licks.

Scale Choices

Let's start off by looking at a few scale choices available to us. We'll work in the key of C for this lesson, but you can transfer these ideas to any key. In the key of C, the I chord is C or C7.

C MINOR PENTATONIC OR BLUES

Even though C7 contains an E (major 3rd), our ears have no trouble accepting the minor pentatonic or blues scales, which contain E \flat (minor 3rd), as countless players have demonstrated throughout the years. Here's the most common form, known as box position. The dots showing the \flat 5th note (the blues note) are encircled.



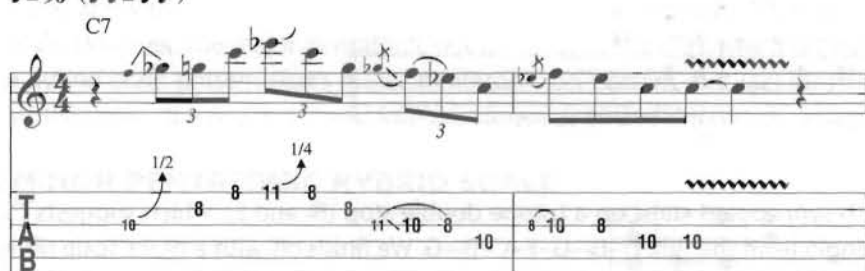
8fr

Let's look at a typical lick using the C blues scale. Notice how the 4th (F) is used at the end to provide a bit of tension, which is resolved directly to the root.



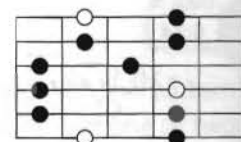
CD 1

$\text{♩} = 96$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)



C MAJOR PENTATONIC

This one is much brighter sounding and doesn't see quite as much use. It's got a bit of a country blues flair to it at times, but it can also sound a bit uptown as well. Here's a common form for C major pentatonic.



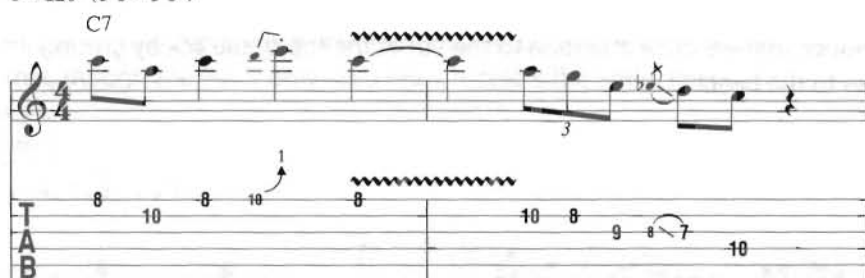
7fr

And here's a lick from C major pentatonic. Notice how the 2nd (D) at the end is graced into with a slide from a half step above, which helps add a bit more of an edge to it.



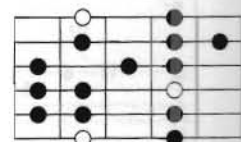
CD 1

$\text{♩} = 120$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)



C MIXOLYDIAN

This is the scale (or mode) that's tailor-made for the C7 chord. It's basically a major pentatonic scale with an added 4th (F) and \flat 7th (B \flat). It tends to be a bit jazzier sounding and isn't as commonly used in real down-home blues.



7fr



TRACK 36

0:23

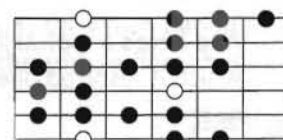
$\text{♩} = 120$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

C7



Combining the Scales

Now comes the fun part. We can also combine notes from the different scales, which opens up our possibilities dramatically. Some people call this the “composite blues scale.” It would look like this in seventh and eighth position.



7fr

Now let's check out some licks that use this combining concept. This first one begins with a pickup from C major pentatonic, continues with a minor pentatonic bend, and then descends with a major pentatonic/blues hybrid line. We resolve at the end with the minor-to-major 3rd hammer-on.

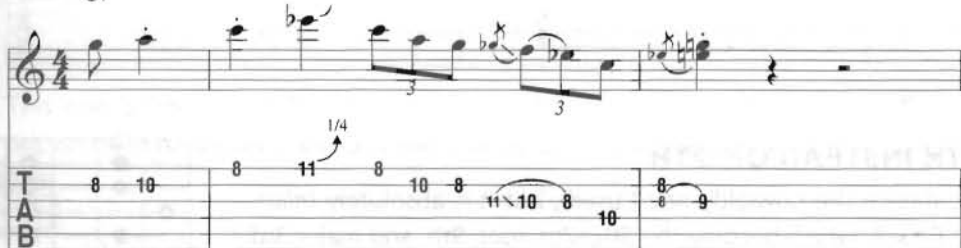


TRACK 36

0:34

$\text{♩} = 120$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

C7



Our final example is an interesting combination of major and minor/blues sounds throughout. After the most pedestrian of all blues bends—from the $\flat 7$ th up to the tonic—we immediately move to major pentatonic territory, volleying the tonic (C) on string 1 against the major 6th (A) on string 2. In measure 2, we take advantage of the symmetrical fingering pattern (frets 8 and 10) that exists when you combine the scales.

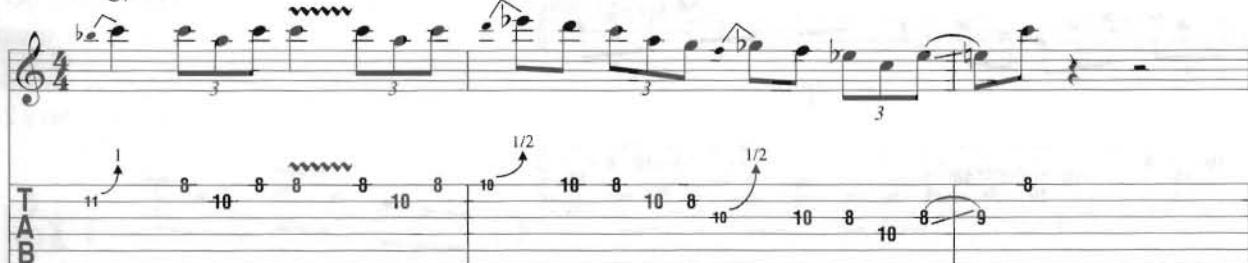


TRACK 36

0:44

$\text{♩} = 88$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

C7



As you can see, the options expand exponentially when you combine the various approaches. You can also alternate as well—one lick from minor pentatonic, then one from major, etc. The only limit is your imagination in this regard. Enjoy!

LESSON #37:

SOLOING STRATEGIES FOR THE IV CHORD

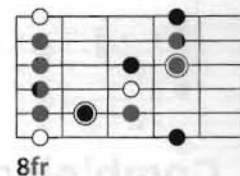
The blues is unique in that it normally consists of all dominant chords. This, combined with the fact that there is still a strong sense of one tonality, requires that the soloist sometimes employ different soloing strategies for each chord. In this lesson, we'll look at some soloing strategies for the IV chord and see how they can be put to use in several licks.

Scale Choices

Let's start off by looking at a few scale choices available to us. We'll work in the key of C for this lesson, but you can transfer these ideas to any key. In the key of C, the IV chord is F or F7. For each audio track, a C7 chord will be played first for context.

C MINOR PENTATONIC OR BLUES

The tonic minor pentatonic or blues scale is always a choice for any of the three chords in a standard blues. Over the IV chord, the $\flat 3$ rd of the scale ($E\flat$ in this case) even functions as the $\flat 7$ th of the IV chord. Here's the most common form, known as box position. The dots for the $\flat 5$ th note (the blues note) are encircled.



And here's a typical lick using the C blues scale over F7. Notice how the 4th (F) is used at the end to provide a bit of tension, which is resolved directly with the root.

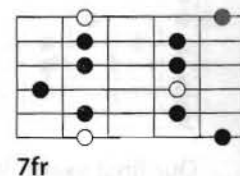


CD 1 $\text{♩} = 88$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

F7

C MINOR PENTATONIC WITH 6TH INSTEAD OF $\flat 7$ TH

This scale doesn't have a proper name (hence the unwieldy one I used), but it is absolutely *tailor-made* for the IV chord. It's spelled C-E \flat -F-G-A, which become the 5th, $\flat 7$ th, root, 9th, and major 3rd of the F7 chord, respectively.



And here's a lick from that scale. Notice that we also add the $\flat 5$ th ($G\flat$) from the C blues scale in passing. This scale and the chord couldn't be better matched!

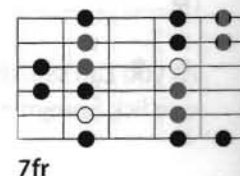


CD 1 $\text{♩} = 88$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

F7

F MIXOLYDIAN

This is just like the previous scale with an added $B\flat$ and D. It tends to be a bit jazzier sounding and isn't quite as common, but it's still a great sound.



Here's how F Mixolydian sounds over the F7 IV chord. Note that, although all seven tones are used, we're accenting chord tones (F, A, C, or E \flat) on the downbeats.



♩ = 104 (♩ = ♯♩)

F7

WHY NO F MINOR PENTATONIC?

Playing the minor pentatonic based off the root of the IV chord usually sounds a bit sour. This is because the \flat 3rd of that scale would be A \flat , which would be the \flat 6th of the key of C. This is a note that doesn't appear in the C Mixolydian mode or in any of the chords used in a 12-bar blues in C. It's just a little too far out there most of the time, although it is used occasionally. In a minor blues, however, it's a much more acceptable sound, because the iv chord is minor and therefore contains that note.

Combining the Scales

Let's take a look at a few more licks that freely combine the scales we looked at. If you were really paying attention, you may have noticed that the F Mixolydian mode contains all the notes of the first two scales. However, it's common to limit one's thinking to a specific scale to target certain tones at a certain time. In other words, rather than saying, "Play F Mixolydian here, but avoid these two notes," it's easier for most people to simply think of those five remaining notes as their own pentatonic scale. Here's another one that makes use of the minor pentatonic with the 6th. We're exploiting the tritone here that lies between A and E \flat .



♩ = 104 (♩ = ♯♩)

F7

This one is from the F Mixolydian mode and makes prominent use of double stops in 3rds. Incidentally, if this lick were appearing in measures 5–6 of a 12-bar blues in C, it would resolve perfectly down a half step to E, which would be the 3rd of C7.



♩ = 104 (♩ = ♯♩)

F7

Our final example uses C minor pentatonic. Notice the rhythmic imitation at work.



♩ = 104 (♩ = ♯♩)

F7

LESSON #38:

SOLOING STRATEGIES FOR THE V CHORD

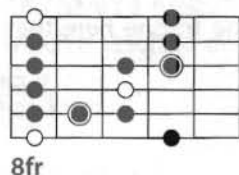
The blues is a unique style in that it usually consists of all dominant chords. This, combined with the fact that there is still a strong sense of one tonality, requires that the soloist sometimes employ different soloing strategies for each chord. Some licks will sound great over the I chord, but not as good over the IV chord, etc. In this lesson, we'll look at some soloing strategies for the V chord and see how they can be put to use in several licks.

Scale Choices

Let's start off by looking at a few scale choices available to us. We'll work in the key of C for this lesson, but you can transfer these ideas to any key. In the key of C, the V chord is G or G7. For each audio track, a C7 chord will be played first for context.

C MINOR PENTATONIC OR BLUES

In a 12-bar blues, the tonic minor pentatonic or blues scale can be used over every chord. Here's the most common form, known as box position. The dots for the $\flat 5$ th note (the blues note) are encircled.



Here's a C blues lick over G7. Notice how we resolve the line at the end to the root of the V chord, G.

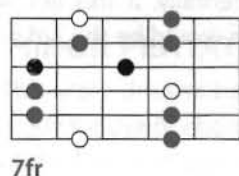
TRACK 38
0:00

CD 1 $\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♩)

G7

C MAJOR PENTATONIC

This one is brighter sounding than the minor pentatonic, but it's a great sound over the V. It contains the note D, which is a chord tone (5th) of the V chord. Here's a common form for C major pentatonic.



And here's a lick from C major pentatonic over G7. The bend up to the E is a great sound and functions as the 6th (or 13th) over the V chord, which sounds nice when it's resolved to the D (5th of the G chord).

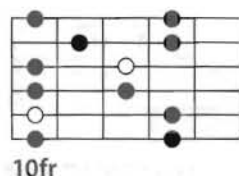
TRACK 38
0:10

CD 1 $\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♩)

G7

G MINOR PENTATONIC OR BLUES

The minor pentatonic or blues based off the root of the V is also a possibility. Here's a fingering for G blues that's close to the C box position.



And here's what a G blues lick sounds like over the G7 chord. Notice the accents placed on the $\flat 7$ th (F) and $\flat 3$ rd (Bb) throughout.

TRACK 38
0:20

CD 1 $\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♩)

G7

G MIXOLYDIAN

Finally, we have G Mixolydian—the matching mode for the G7 chord. This will tend to sound a bit jazzier than the others, but it can be very melodic.



9fr

And this is what G Mixolydian sounds like over the V chord G7. Notice the ear-catching major 3rd of the chord (B).



$\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♯♩)

G7



Combining the Scales

We can also combine notes from the different scales, which opens things up dramatically. In fact, if we combine all the notes from these scales, we end up with every single note except A \flat . Rather than thinking of some eleven-note mega-scale, though, it's usually easier to think about using one scale for a few notes and then switching to another.

Let's check out some licks that use this combining concept. This first one begins with a pickup from C major pentatonic and continues with a minor pentatonic bend, resolving to the root of the V (G).



$\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♯♩)

G7

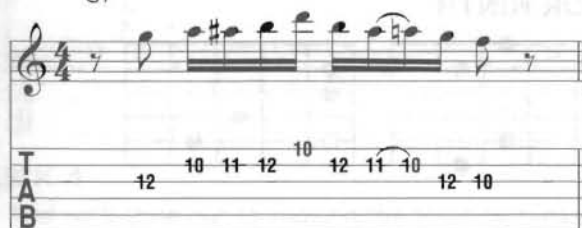


In this line, we're decorating the Mixolydian mode with a few chromatic passing tones.

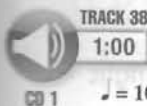


$\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♯♩)

G7



This last one begins with G blues and then mixes in G Mixolydian.



$\text{♩} = 104$ (♩ = ♯♩)

G7



LESSON #39: JAZZIN' IT UP WITH ARPEGGIOS

When some blues players hear the word “arpeggio,” they think only of some sweep-picking shredder mindlessly traversing up and down the guitar neck at warp speed. In fact, many blues players do in fact include some arpeggios in their solos, even if they aren’t aware of it. Jazz players have been outlining the changes of a blues tune with arpeggios for decades, and we can borrow a few ideas from them to provide a fresh sound. In this lesson we’ll see how we can jazz up our blues a bit with arpeggios.

What Is an Arpeggio?

An arpeggio is simply the notes of a chord played separately as a melody. Instead of playing a C triad, for example, as a chord like this:



We can arpeggiate through the notes like this:

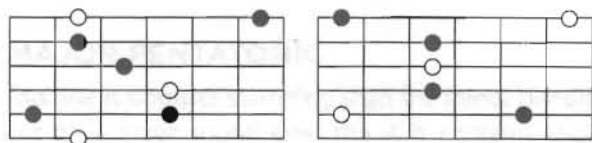


Just as we can have seventh chords, ninth chords, etc., we can play those as arpeggios.

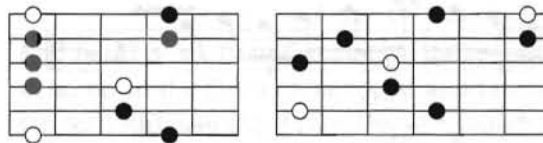
Common Arpeggio Shapes

Let’s look at some common arpeggio shapes that we’ll use in this lesson. In each one, the root of the chord will appear as an open circle (in each octave that it appears).

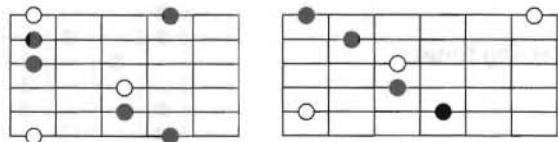
MAJOR TRIAD



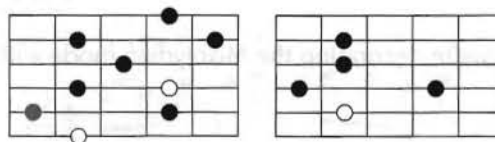
MINOR SEVENTH



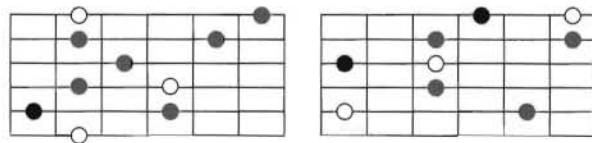
MINOR TRIAD



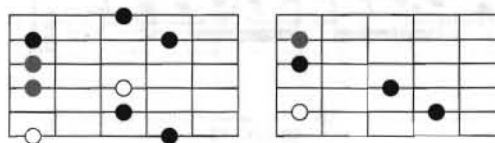
DOMINANT NINTH



DOMINANT SEVENTH



MINOR NINTH



Ok, a few things right off the bat:

- ▶ We will rarely ever play these shapes all the way up or down. Rather, we’ll mostly be playing fragments of them—three, four, or five notes or so.
- ▶ Don’t worry about being able to blaze through these at the same speed as your most burning blues scale licks right now. These usually sound best at relatively slower speeds anyway.

Licks

Ok, now that we’ve learned the shapes. Let’s see how we can put them to work. We’ll work in a C blues throughout this lesson, but these ideas can be transferred to any key.

LICK 1

This first lick begins in bar 3 of the form and is a basic example of using a dominant seventh arpeggio at the end of the I chord to lead to the IV chord. Note that we resolve at the end to the nearest chord tone of the F chord.

TRACK 39

0:00

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

C7 F7

etc.

LICK 2

In this example, which starts at measure 5 of the 12-bar form, we're outlining the IV chord (F7) with its matching seventh arpeggio before resorting to a C blues scale lick to lead back to the I chord (C7).

TRACK 39

0:13

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

F7 C7

etc.

LICK 3

Here we begin in measure 3 with some C blues scale ideas. In measure 4, we superimpose a Gm7 arpeggio on beats 1 and 2 and move to C7 on beats 3 and 4, resolving to an F7 chord tone in measure 5. The formula at work here is playing a minor seventh arpeggio based off the 5th of the dominant chord. It's nice and jazzy sounding.

TRACK 39

0:25

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 120$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

C7 (Gm7) (C7) F7

etc.

LICK 4

And we'll close out by moving the same dominant seventh arpeggio line down from the V chord (G7) to the IV chord (F7) in measures 9 and 10 of the form.

TRACK 39

0:37

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 120$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

G7 F7 C7

etc.

LESSON #40: THE ART OF RESOLUTION

If you've ever been to an open mic blues jam, you've probably heard quite a mixed bag of skill levels. While some players may seem to play logical phrases that neatly fold into one another, others, who may have just as much chops, seem to play things that stall and fight against themselves. What's the difference here? I'd wager that the majority of the time it boils down to the art of resolution, and that's the subject of this lesson.

The Basic Idea

So what do we mean by resolution? Basically, we're referring to the way in which our phrases end. More specifically, however, in this lesson we're talking about how our phrases transition to a new chord. There are only three chords in a standard 12-bar form, but for many players, it doesn't seem to matter which chord they're playing over at any given time. They seem to play the same stuff regardless. Sometimes this will work, and sometimes it won't.

I suspect the true problem here is that these players are not really *listening* to what they're playing. They've put in some work and learned how to play some nice blues licks, but they're just letting their fingers do the walking without really hearing what's going on. A seasoned veteran of blues improvisation knows what's coming, harmony-wise, and isn't taken off guard when a new chord arrives. They expect it, and they tailor their phrases in anticipation of it.

To illustrate, let's take a look at two similar phrases in the key of C. The first one is played without any regard to what's going on beneath. It's basically one neat blues lick followed by another.

TRACK 40
0:00
CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

etc.

Now let's change it up a bit to anticipate the change to the IV chord, F7.

TRACK 40
0:16
CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

etc.

Hear the difference? Just by thinking ahead a bit and targeting that F7 chord consciously, all the tension and momentum built up in the first four measures isn't wasted; it comes to a satisfying conclusion and nicely bookmarks the end of the phrase.

Resolution Choices

There are basically four different choices we have when transitioning to a new chord. Let's take a close look at each strategy.

RESOLVING TO THE NEAREST CHORD TONE OF THE NEW CHORD

This is a strategy that jazzers use all the time; consequently, it can sound a bit jazzier than traditional blues scale playing. Of course, this requires a bit of knowledge or a trained ear, because you need to know what the chord tones are for each chord. For example, let's say we're moving from the I chord, C7, to the IV chord, F7, as in measures 4–5 of the 12-bar blues. There are four chord tones in F7: F, A, C, and Eb. So we want to try to end our C7 phrase on a note that's next to one of those so we can land on it to coincide with the arrival of the chord. Here's a lick starting from measure 3.

LESSON #41: REPEATED LICKS

When soloing over a blues tune, the melodic material is often fairly limited. In fact, many players solo with only five notes. In these instances, it falls upon the soloists to find creative methods for injecting tension and release into their improvisation. One such device is the repeated lick, which we'll study in this lesson.

The Basic Idea

It's a fairly simple concept, but it's not entirely obvious to everyone. The idea is to generate momentum, and therefore build tension, by playing the same thing over and over for a period of time. By doing this, you draw in the audience and automatically create a sense of anticipation. They know you can't (or won't) keep it up forever, so they're listening intently to hear what will come next.

The repeated phrase can be fast or slow. It can consist of 20 notes or only one. It can be in the lowest depths of your neck or the highest of fret-tops up in the stratosphere. The most important thing is that you stick the landing! You could drive the audience into a fevered frenzy like they've never known, but if you stumble at the end, you'll lose almost all the momentum you've generated.

Licks

Let's check out some examples to hear how this idea works.

LICK 1

This first one is an incredibly common yet effective device that's been used by everyone from T-Bone Walker to Jimi Hendrix to Stevie Ray Vaughan. We're just working out of the D minor pentatonic box here. Notice how we exit with a soaring bend to the root of the IV chord.

CD 1 **TRACK 41** 0:00

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♪ ♪)

D7

G7

TAB

12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 12 10 13

LICK 2

The double stop is another favorite in this regard, as demonstrated by this lick in A. Notice how the frequency of the slides increases as we near the release—an excellent way to raise the level of anticipation.

[illegible]

TRACK 41

0:22

$\lambda = 104$

C7

[illegible]

LICK 4

TRACK 41

0:38

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

E7

LICK 5

TRACK 41

0:49

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

D7

G7

[illegible]

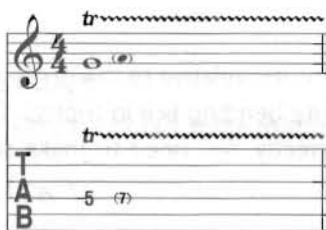
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LESSON #42: TRILLS

Often associated with classical Baroque melodies, the trill—the rapid fluctuation of two pitches—has since been adopted by the blues guitarist in several ways. It can be flashy or understated, and it's not easy, though Hendrix, Stevie Ray, and many others make it look that way. You'll need to build up some endurance, and you'll feel the burn in your forearm for sure at first!

How It Works

We trill on the guitar by alternately hammering on and pulling off continuously. Usually, the lower note is picked once, which is almost always fretted by the first finger (unless it's an open string). Then a higher note is hammered on, pulled off, hammered on, pulled off, etc., as quickly as possible. Trills of a whole or half step are most common, although larger intervals are occasionally used as well. Here's the basic idea on the D string.



And here's the idea with an open string. When trilling on an open string, some players hammer and pull with their first finger, and some use their second. I've even seen one player use his third—never seen the fourth though! Experiment and see which feels most comfortable to you.



A word of warning: trills aren't easy. If you've never worked on them before, don't expect to be blurring through them immediately the way Stevie Ray or Hendrix did. Your arm is going to get tired, so be sure to rest if you feel any pain.

Licks

Now let's check out some classic trilling licks.

LICK 1

This first one is a standard blues move and involves playing a C7 triple stop and trilling on the middle string from the minor 3rd to the major 3rd.



LICK 2

Another blues staple is the open-string trill in the key of E. Hendrix and Stevie Ray loved this one.

TRACK 42
0:22

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)
E7

LICK 3

Here's something else that Stevie would occasionally do: string together consecutive trills on different strings.

TRACK 42
0:36

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 104$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

LICK 4

Another fairly common move is to move a trill up (or down) along the length of one string, adjusting the interval to suit the particular scale. Here's an example of that in E major pentatonic. Note that we have to alternate between a two-fret trill and a three-fret trill.

TRACK 42
0:44

CD 1

$\text{♩} = 96$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

As mentioned earlier, it's definitely not as easy as it looks, so be patient at first. It'll take a bit of time to build up the strength to do them for extended periods of time for sure. Good luck!

LESSON #43: PLAYING “ACROSS THE BAR”

Guitarists tend to be a bit narrow in terms of musical influences. Many blues guitarists listen to mainly... *other* blues guitarists. While there are certainly a staggering number of great players out there, we can further broaden our bag of tricks if we listen to other styles and/or other instruments. Jazz is a good example. Although the harmonic palette may be a bit rich for standard blues tunes, there are many rhythmic concepts that can be applied with ease. One of these is phrasing “across the bar.”

How It Works

In order to prevent your licks from sounding too rhythmically predictable, it's a good idea to vary where you begin and end your phrases. If you always start a lick on beat 1 (or always end there), for example, it'll get old quickly. Playing “across the bar line” is a great way to mix it up. This means that, instead of beginning a phrase on beat 1, you begin on beat 4 or beat 4 1/2 of the previous measure. This can really make your phrases stand out and keep things interesting.

For example, here's a typical C minor pentatonic phrase. Notice that it begins and ends on beat 1.

TRACK 43
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 104 (♩ = ♩)

TAB

There's nothing wrong with this phrase, but it's just a little square in terms of rhythm. Listen to what happens when we alter it so that we're phrasing across the bar line. In this example, we haven't changed any notes; we've just moved both the first and last notes back by an 8th note. Check out how it comes to life.

TRACK 43
0:08

CD 1 ♩ = 104 (♩ = ♩)

TAB

And here's how it sounds with the first and last notes moved back a full beat. Notice that we omitted one C note toward the end in order to accomplish this.

TRACK 43
0:17

CD 1 ♩ = 104 (♩ = ♩)

TAB

Licks

Now that you have the basic idea, let's check it out in a few licks. We'll first check out how a lick might normally be played, and then we'll alter it to include across-the-bar phrasing.

LICK 1

TRACK 43

0:25

1

$\text{♩} = 140$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

LICK 1—ACROSS THE BAR

TRACK 43

0:33

1

$\text{♩} = 140$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

LICK 2

TRACK 43

0:42

1

$\text{♩} = 90$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

LICK 2—ACROSS THE BAR

TRACK 43

0:52

1

$\text{♩} = 90$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

I'm not implying that you should always use this concept. It's just another color in your palette. There are certainly plenty of times where playing right on beat 1 of a measure is called for, but by mixing it up here and there, you can lend a bit more depth to your improvisations. Give it a try!

LESSON #44: CHORD FRAGMENTS

Have you ever noticed how some blues players seem to throw in a brief double stop or triple stop occasionally to reinforce the harmony? These aren't generated in a vacuum; they're almost always fragments of larger chord voicings that have been distilled down to their essential elements. This is common in jazz as well, and it can be especially nice to use when playing with only a bassist—or completely by yourself.

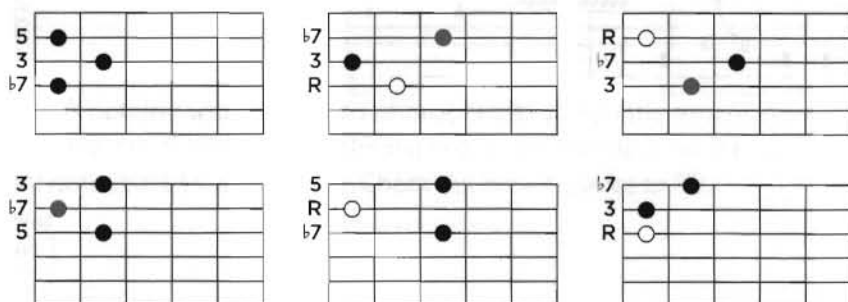
How It Works

The idea is to answer some of your licks (or precede them) with a brief two- or three-note chord fragment that injects a bit of harmony into the proceedings. If you're a singer as well as a player, for example, you may be used to the idea of polluting the space around the vocals with brief fills. This is kind of the opposite; you're filling the space between your licks with a brief chordal fragment.

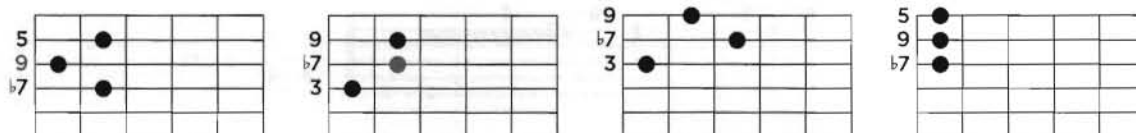
Common Fragment Shapes

Let's take a look at some common fragments that we can use with this idea. Again, nearly all of these are essentially slimmed-down versions of fuller voicings, which would tend to sound a bit clumsy if used in this way. In each voicing, the degrees are labeled so you can see how each note relates to the chord. If the root is present, it will appear as an open circle. Many of these are rootless however.

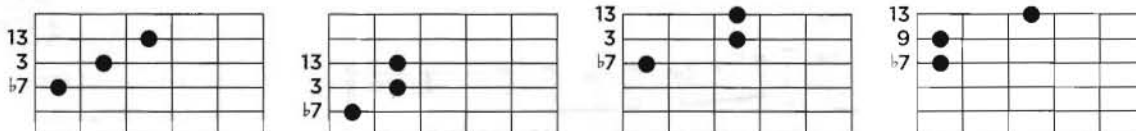
DOMINANT SEVENTH



DOMINANT NINTH



DOMINANT THIRTEENTH



Note that, though all of these shapes contain three notes, they will occasionally be scaled back to only two notes. Now that you're armed with a wealth of chord fragments, let's check out how we can intersperse them into our licks.

LICK 1

Here's a basic example in C using a dominant seventh fragment on strings 4–2, which is extremely common.

TRACK 44

0:00

♩ = 150 (♩ = ♪♪)

C7

LICK 2

Here, we're interrupting a lick over the IV chord in a D blues (measures 5–6) with a quick G9 fragment before resolving back to the I chord (D7).

TRACK 44

0:06

♩ = 124 (♩ = ♪♪)

G7

LICK 3

This idea is used in slow blues tunes as well. The ninth chord usually reigns supreme here and is often approached from a half step above or below, as demonstrated by this lick in G. We're moving from the I chord in measure 4 to the IV chord (C9) in measure 5.

TRACK 44

0:15

♩ = 56

G7

(C#9)

C9

LICK 4

Here's an example of how we may use a thirteenth fragment in a jump blues setting. We're in B♭ here, and this would kick off the 12-bar form.

TRACK 44

0:29

♩ = 160 (♩ = ♪♪)

B♭13

E♭9

(D9) (E♭9)

One benefit to this idea is that it will most likely inadvertently help your phrasing. By finding holes to fill with a chord jab, you're creating bookends to your phrases, which should help you organize them more musically. Play around with this idea; it's a nice tool to have.

LESSON #45: BLUES ENDINGS

One of the biggest buzzkills in all of blues is a sloppy ending. You know the kind: the guitarist spansks his final chord, but the drummer keeps going for a few beats before abandoning his beat and giving way to a wash of toms and cymbals. Or, the band plows through a flawless turnaround only to thud lifelessly on the I chord in an attempt at shutting down the song. In this lesson, we're going to explore the blues ending so you'll be armed and ready to properly lay a tune to rest at the next blues jam.

How It Works

Blues music, along with jazz, is one of the most improvisational of all genres. You're constantly put in the position of playing with new people, and you often don't even know what tune you're playing until a few seconds before the count-off. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, several unspoken conventions have developed with regards to how to get in and out of the song. It's your job as an experienced blues player to know these conventions and communicate with your bandmates to assure a smooth musical dismount.

At the end of almost every 12-bar chorus, we have what's known as a turnaround in measures 11–12, which normally moves from the I chord to the V chord. There are many variables on how and when it reaches the V chord, and that will depend on the particular song.

On the ending, however, you do *not* move to the V chord! If you do, you kill the opportunity for the classic blues ending. I'll repeat: *you do not move to the V chord when you want to end a blues song.* The bass player may walk up or down to the V, but he will not stay there. *The target that everyone is shooting for is the I chord on the "and" of beat 2 in measure 12.* This chord will almost always be approached chromatically from above or below.

The Cue

Generally speaking, there should be a bandleader calling the shots. This doesn't have to be a huge deal, and "calling the shots" often times means nothing more than putting up a hand or giving a nod in preparation for the finish. If it's a guitar-led trio or quartet, for example, this would most likely be the guitarist. If it's a harp player taking all the leads, then he or she would likely give the cue. At any rate, at some point before measure 11 in the last chorus, the soloist should give a cue, indicating that they're ready to end the song. When the cue is given, it's time. Again, the ending will start at measure 11 of the form.

Examples

Let's look at some examples to see how this works. Each one of these will begin at measure 9 in the form, which is from the V chord.

ENDING 1

This first example is perhaps the most famous blues ending of all. The band hits beat 1 of measure 11 and stops, allowing the soloist to make his final statement by himself. They'll often join back in measure 12, either on beat 2 or the "and" of beat 1. Here's that idea in the key of E.



CD 1

$\text{♩} = 108$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$)

Chord progression: B7, A7, E N.C., D#7 E7

ENDING 2

In this G blues ending, we see another variation on this: the straight 8th ending. With this ending, the soloist decides to play straight 8th notes during his final phrase. When this happens, the band follows suit, joining in on the “and” of beat 1 in measure 12 with the chromatic approach chords played in straight 8ths as well.



$\text{♩} = 108$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

D7 C7 N.C. F7 F#7 G7

*Played as even eighth notes.

ENDING 3

Often, the band slows down with a ritardando (*rit.*) for the final chromatic approach chords, as demonstrated here.



$\text{♩} = 108$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♩}$)

E7	D7	N.C.	G7	G#7	A7
----	----	------	----	-----	----

let ring -----+ let ring -----+

ENDING 4

One exception to this is the double-cue ending. In this example, the soloist gives the cue that he's ready to end the song, and the band drops out after beat 1 of measure 11 in normal fashion. However, the soloist decides that he needs a little bit more time in the limelight, playing in free time until he runs out of ideas, he breaks a string, or the crowd starts throwing beer bottles. At that point, he gives another cue to the band, and they all come crashing down on the final I chord.



$\text{♩} = 130$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♪} \text{♪}$)

A9	G9	N.C.
----	----	------

Freely
N.C.

Of course, there are variations on these ideas. Bands that actually play together on a regular basis may have their own specific endings worked out, but they'll most likely adhere to the rough outline presented here. However, if you're winging it at an open blues jam, keep your eyes and ears open for the cue—or be sure to give the cue in time if you're the one soloing at the end—and then be sure to hit that I chord on the “and” of beat 2 in measure 12.

LESSON #46: BLUES INTROS

One of the worst mistakes an inexperienced blues band can make is not deciding on how to start a blues song. If you've ever been to an open blues jam, you may have noticed this type of thing happen. The band starts on the I chord, they move to the IV chord, back to the I chord, and then half the band moves to the V while the other half stays on the I. There are plenty of other trainwrecks in this vein as well. In this lesson, we're going to explore several standard blues intros, so you can hopefully avoid taking part in something like this.

Always Assume the Responsibility if No One Else Does

Unless you're playing a song that has a clear, established intro that everyone knows, the intro should be discussed. As we'll see, this can be as brief as someone yelling "from the VI!" or it can be a bit more detailed. If no one else steps up and takes charge in this regard—and everyone is just standing around waiting for someone to count it off—it's up to you to take the responsibility and establish what will be done. Do not assume everyone will play the same thing. Chances are, if it's not a well-known song with an established intro, you're headed for a trainwreck.

Intro Templates

So let's examine several standard blues intros that may be called out (or you may call out) at an impromptu blues jam.

FROM THE I (FROM THE TOP)

This is as simple as it gets. Someone gives a four-count, and you simply start from the top of the 12-bar form on the I chord. It's probably the least interesting intro of all, but sometimes it's all that's needed. Here's how it looks in E, using the slow change (no move to the IV chord in measure 2).

TRACK 46
0:00

CD 1 ♩ = 130 (♩ = ♩)

FROM THE TURNAROUND—SHUFFLE

This tells you to start from measure 11 of the form and run through the turnaround. You'll be moving from the I chord to the V chord, usually by way of the chromatic bassline movement, but not always. Note that the chromatic bassline can rise (1-3-4-#4-5) or descend (1-7-6-6-5). If you're going to be playing a chromatic turnaround lick on guitar, you may want to establish which one the bass player will play. Here's an example of this intro in the key of A.

TRACK 46
0:15

CD 1 ♩ = 104 (♩ = ♩)

w/ pick & fingers
let ring 4 let ring 4 let ring 4

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
T	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
A	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
B	0	5	4	3	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2

FROM THE TURNAROUND—SLOW BLUES

This will still start from the same point, but the turnaround in a slow blues tunes is usually different than those in shuffles. It normally moves I (two beats), IV (two beats), I (two beats), and V (two beats). Here's how that may look in the key of C.

TRACK 46
0:28

♩ = 56

FROM THE V

In this intro, we're starting from measure 9 in the 12-bar form. So we'll be playing a measure of V, a measure of IV, and then the two-measure turnaround. This one's especially popular in slow blues. This example is in G.

TRACK 46
0:45

♩ = 104 (♩ = ♩)

There may be other intros that you come across, but these will cover probably over 90 percent of your situations. If someone ever calls out something that you don't understand, please just swallow your pride and ask for clarification. It's worth it to avoid the possible disaster!

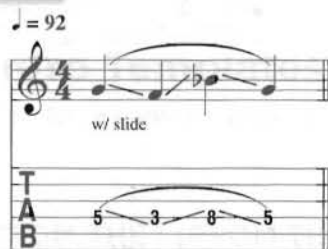
LESSON #47: SLIDE GUITAR BASICS

Though many players never mess with it, some of the most classic blues tunes ever were played with a slide. It's a specific skill and can take months or years to master; don't expect to be playing like Derek Trucks in a few weeks. However, you don't have to become a virtuoso in order to appreciate the slide and exploit its unique tonal qualities. They're great for simple riffs as well, as we'll soon see.

The Basic Technique

Some players wear the slide on the pinky, some on their third finger, and others on their middle finger. There's no set rule (the index finger is rarely, if ever, used), so see what feels best to you. When playing with the slide, we make contact with the string but don't push it down to the fretboard. For proper intonation, you need to align the slide directly over the fretwire. If you're out in front of the wire, you'll be sharp; if you're behind, you'll be flat.

After plucking the string, you can move the slide up or down to raise the pitch in a steady gliss.

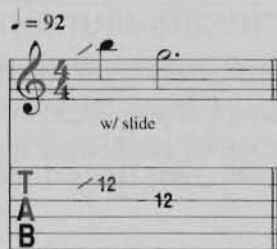


CORRECT SLIDE POSITION
FOR A NOTE ON STRING 4, FRET 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUTING

A very important part of clean slide playing is muting. This involves both hands working together. On the fret hand, the fingers behind the slide should lightly touch all the strings to keep them quiet, preventing the other strings from making noise. Some players play slide with a pick, and others use fingerstyle or hybrid picking technique (pick and fingers). Regardless of your preference, you'll use the palm of your pick hand to mute all the bass strings below the string you're playing. That's the easy part. The tricky part is when you want to play single notes with the slide on *different strings* and not allow them to ring together. In order to do this, you'll need to mute a string with the pick hand once you're not playing on it anymore.

For example, if I'm not concerned about keeping the notes separate, these two notes will ring together.



However, if I want the notes to be distinct from one another, I need to mute the B string as soon as I pluck the G string. Listen to the next demo on the CD to hear this. This is accomplished with a fret-hand finger. It will take some work at first, but it will eventually become second nature.

EXERCISE 1

Let's start with a few exercises to get the fundamentals down. This first one concentrates on playing in tune on all six strings.



EXERCISE 2

This example focuses on your pick-hand muting. If you're not using good muting technique, this one will sound pretty ugly.

TRACK 47
0:37

♩ = 92

w/ slide

LESSON #48:

ACOUSTIC FINGERSTYLE BLUES IN DROP D TUNING

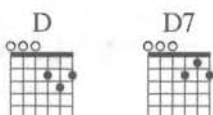
If you spent much time studying pre-war blues, you'll discover that many players used alternate tunings. This was for various reasons—sometimes it was related to the use of a slide, while other times it allowed them to easily fret chords with one finger. One of the more popular alternate tunings is Drop D. In this lesson we'll see how it's applied to acoustic fingerstyle blues.

Simple as It Gets!

As far as alternate tunings go, you can't really get any easier than Drop D. You simply tune your low E string down a whole step to D. If you don't have a chromatic tuner, you can get pretty close by simply tuning to an octave below your open fourth string (D).

DROP D TUNING: D-A-D-G-B-E

That's it. You're in Drop D. The first thing you'll likely notice is the power you've gained in the bottom end. You can fret a basic D or D7 chord, but now you can strum through all six strings to get a huge sound. Go on and try it!



Right-Hand Technique

Pretty much anything goes as far as right-hand technique. The great bluesmen of the past made use of whatever worked for them: thumb and one finger, thumb and two fingers, strumming with the thumb, strumming with a finger, etc. You may find you end up using different techniques to achieve different sounds depending on the riff. For example, listen to the same riff played with two different techniques: first using multiple fingers to pluck the strings simultaneously, and then using the first finger to strum the triple stops with an upstroke.



Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-E
♩ = 80

Chord progression: D7, D°7, Em7b5, D

Exploiting the Octaves

Fingerstyle players love this tuning because it allows the alternating of octave bass notes with no fretting. This way, you can create a droning octave bass and still have all four fingers to play melodies on top. Obviously, the key of D is most common. Double- and triple-stops like those in the following example were often used to fill in lines between vocals.

Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-E

♩ = 120 (♩ = ♩)

D

w/ fingers

Here's a blues ditty that pairs a single-note melody on top with the droning octaves in the bass.

Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-E

♩ = 136 (♩ = ♩)

D

w/ fingers

BENDS

Don't forget that you can add bends to the melody as well. This will create an illusion that two different guitars are playing.

Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-E

♩ = 136 (♩ = ♩)

D

w/ fingers

TURNAROUNDS

We'll close out with a turnaround figure in D.

Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-E

♩ = 84 (♩ = ♩)

D D7 D°7 Gm/Bb A7

w/ fingers

You'll hear this tuning everywhere. It's even used on electric guitar by some players; Elmore James is one. Have fun exploring!

LESSON #49:

ACOUSTIC FINGERSTYLE BLUES IN DOUBLE DROP D TUNING

If you've dabbled in Drop D tuning, maybe it's time to take the next step. Double Drop D tuning can open up even more melodic possibilities, and it's still not too hard on the left brain with regards to new fretboard architecture. So drop that pick (unless it's a thumbpick), and let's take a closer look at acoustic fingerstyle blues in Double Drop D tuning.

A Logical Progression

Many players have fooled around with Drop D tuning (D-A-D-G-B-E), and Double Drop D is a logical next step. With Double Drop D, we tune both E strings (6 and 1) a whole step down to D. If you don't have a tuner with you, you can quickly get there by matching the pitch of your open D string (though an octave below and above).

DOUBLE DROP D TUNING: D-A-D-G-B-D

Welcome to Double Drop D tuning!

Two Halves

This is an interesting tuning, because if you play the bottom three strings open, it sounds like a D chord. If you play the top four strings open, though, it sounds like a G chord. You can exploit this fact to get some interesting sounds with little effort.



CD 1 Double Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-D

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♩)

Double Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-D

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♩)

D G D G7 D

w/ fingers 1/4 1/4 1/4 1/4

TAB

D Strings Everywhere!

The most attractive aspect of this tuning is the fact that you have three D strings in different octaves. This allows the same thing to be played on three different strings in three different octaves.



CD 1 Double Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-D

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♩)

N.C.(D)

Double Drop D tuning: (low to high) D-A-D-G-B-D

♩ = 116 (♩ = ♩)

N.C.(D)

w/ fingers 1/4 1/4

TAB

COOL MELODIES

The sixth and fourth strings allow you to keep an open bass drone going, and the open high D string allows you to access some melodies that wouldn't be possible in standard tuning. Let's take a look at some examples that exploit these ideas.

♩ = 116 (♩♩ = ♩♩)

The musical notation for "The Wind" by The Beatles is presented in two systems. The first system shows the guitar part in standard notation on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F#7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F#8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F#9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F#10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F#11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F#12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F#13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F#14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F#15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F#16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F#17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F#18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F#19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F#20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F#21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F#22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F#23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F#24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F#25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F#26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F#27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F#28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F#29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F#30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F#31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F#32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F#33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F#34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F#35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F#36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F#37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F#38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F#39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F#40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F#41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F#42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F#43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F#44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F#45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F#46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F#47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F#48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F#49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F#50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F#51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F#52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F#53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F#54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F#55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F#56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F#57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F#58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F#59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F#60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F#61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F#62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F#63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F#64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F#65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F#66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F#67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F#68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F#69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F#70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F#71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F#72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F#73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F#74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F#75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F#76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F#77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F#78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F#79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F#80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F#81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F#82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F#83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F#84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F#85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F#86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F#87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F#88, G88, A88, B88, C89, D89, E89, F#89, G89, A89, B89, C90, D90, E90, F#90, G90, A90, B90, C91, D91, E91, F#91, G91, A91, B91, C92, D92, E92, F#92, G92, A92, B92, C93, D93, E93, F#93, G93, A93, B93, C94, D94, E94, F#94, G94, A94, B94, C95, D95, E95, F#95, G95, A95, B95, C96, D96, E96, F#96, G96, A96, B96, C97, D97, E97, F#97, G97, A97, B97, C98, D98, E98, F#98, G98, A98, B98, C99, D99, E99, F#99, G99, A99, B99, C100, D100, E100, F#100, G100, A100, B100, C101, D101, E101, F#101, G101, A101, B101, C102, D102, E102, F#102, G102, A102, B102, C103, D103, E103, F#103, G103, A103, B103, C104, D104, E104, F#104, G104, A104, B104, C105, D105, E105, F#105, G105, A105, B105, C106, D106, E106, F#106, G106, A106, B106, C107, D107, E107, F#107, G107, A107, B107, C108, D108, E108, F#108, G108, A108, B108, C109, D109, E109, F#109, G109, A109, B109, C110, D110, E110, F#110, G110, A110, B110, C111, D111, E111, F#111, G111, A111, B111, C112, D112, E112, F#112, G112, A112, B112, C113, D113, E113, F#113, G113, A113, B113, C114, D114, E114, F#114, G114, A114, B114, C115, D115, E115, F#115, G115, A115, B115, C116, D116, E116, F#116, G116, A116, B116, C117, D117, E117, F#117, G117, A117, B117, C118, D118, E118, F#118, G118, A118, B118, C119, D119, E119, F#119, G119, A119, B119, C120, D120, E120, F#120, G120, A120, B120, C121, D121, E121, F#121, G121, A121, B121, C122, D122, E122, F#122, G122, A122, B122, C123, D123, E123, F#123, G123, A123, B123, C124, D124, E124, F#124, G124, A124, B124, C125, D125, E125, F#125, G125, A125, B125, C126, D126, E126, F#126, G126, A126, B126, C127, D127, E127, F#127, G127, A127, B127, C128, D128, E128, F#128, G128, A128, B128, C129, D129, E129, F#129, G129, A129, B129, C130, D130, E130, F#130, G130, A130, B130, C131, D131, E131, F#131, G131, A131, B131, C132, D132, E132, F#132, G132, A132, B132, C133, D133, E133, F#133, G133, A133, B133, C134, D134, E134, F#134, G134, A134, B134, C135, D135, E135, F#1

0:38

$\bullet = 116$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♪} \text{♪}$)

D

w/ fingers
let ring throughout

1/4

1/4

D7

TAB

3 3 3 0 3 7 6 0 10 10 11

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Check out some cool turnaround ideas available with the three D strings.

0:53

$\bullet = 96$ ($\text{♪} = \text{♪} \text{♪}$)

D D/F# G G#o7 D/A A7

w/ fingers
let ring throughout

TAB

0 4 5 6 7 0

1:02

$\text{♩} = 96$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

D D7 D^o7 Gm/B^b D/A A7/C[#]

w/ fingers
 let ring

TAB: 0 3 0 2 0 1 0 | 0 2 3 4

You can spend a lot of time experimenting with this tuning and constantly come up with fresh ideas. It's quick and easy to find, and it sounds great. Enjoy!

LESSON #50:

RECORDING AND EQUIPMENT TIPS

With the digital revolution, more and more players are able to produce stellar sounding guitar tracks right from the privacy of their own bedroom. A modest computer, some affordable software, and a decent interface will get you well on your way in the recording world. In this lesson, we'll discuss some tips on how to get the best tone in your home studio.

Studio Layout

Although most bedrooms aren't designed with recording in mind, there are several things we can do to help the acoustic situation. Obviously, you're limited with what you can do, based on a slew of factors, but the more of these suggestions you can employ, the better.

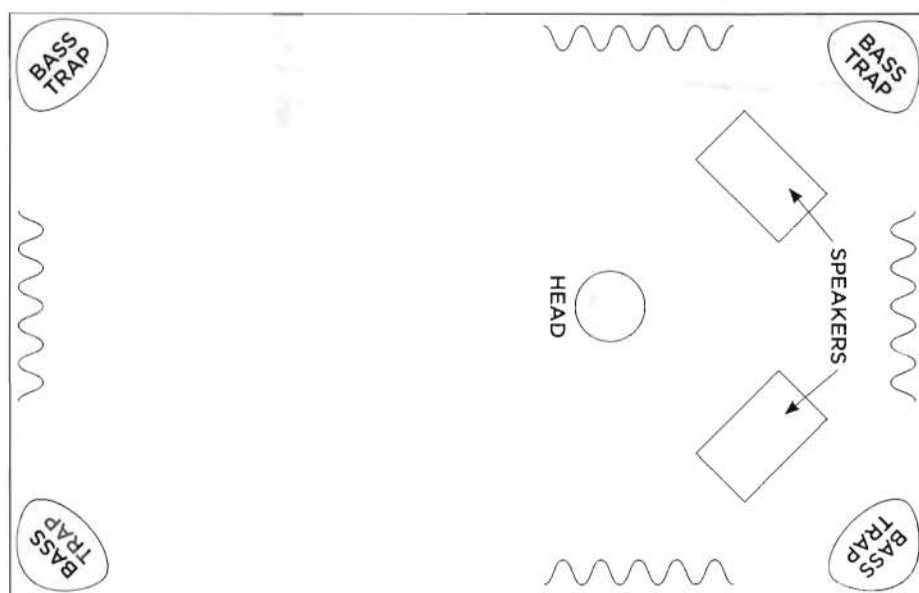
MONITOR (SPEAKER) PLACEMENT

It's best to set up the speakers with their backs to the short wall (assuming a rectangular room); place them equidistant apart in the middle of the width of the room. If you can, bring them out from the back wall to avoid the buildup of bass frequencies. Your head should form an equidistant triangle with the other two monitors.

ABSORBENT MATERIAL

If you have heavy curtains/drapes, a soft chair/sofa, or some other similar object, it will help to place them anywhere along the walls at reflective points (including the ceiling above your head). See the following image for the placement of these items. You're trying to hear only the sound coming from the speakers and not bouncing off any walls.

The more soft, dense material you can place in the corners the better, as this will help cut down on the bass frequencies that tend to build up there. If a bed or a plush chair is already sitting in the corner, that's a good start.



Electric Guitars

Let's look at some specific pointers for recording electric guitars.

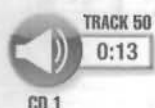
TUBE AMPS

I won't make a blanket statement, because some of the biggest names in the business have played through solid state amps at times, but tube amps are far-and-away the choice for most blues players—specifically older models or ones that have no master volume. This means that to get any grit, you have to turn it up so that the power tubes start to break up. But that's the sound you hear on all those old blues records. The Fender tweed Bassman and Deluxe are two popular amps in this regard. Both have been reissued and are still available today.



DIAL BACK THE DISTORTION A BIT!

If you do end up using an amp with a master volume, or a solid state amp, or some type of digital modeling, try dialing back the distortion. It compresses the sound (levels out the dynamics), and you generally want a responsive tone for the blues. Check out the difference in sound.



TRY CONTRASTING TONES IN AN ENSEMBLE

If you're playing with an organ player that's playing thick, warm, full chords, try using more of a trebly tone and staying out of your lower register. It'll help keep things from getting too muddy.



MINUTE CHANGES IN MIC PLACEMENT MAKE BIG DIFFERENCES!

When miking an amp, the slightest change in position (even an inch) can make a noticeable difference, so experiment. Listen to the audio to hear how moving the mic a few inches can change the tone considerably.



SINGLE COILS OR HUMBUCKERS?

Guitarists are usually pretty divided on this topic into the Gibson (humbucker) or Fender (single coil) camp. The truth is that both have been used on countless classic blues records, so there's no use arguing which is "better" or more of the "true blues sound." Generally speaking, most players tend to play in a style that suits one of them more than the other—i.e., Texas blues with a Strat or Chicago blues with a Gibson, etc.—but if you can afford more than one guitar, why not try your hand at both types? Of course, you don't want to run out and make a rash purchase. I'm just suggesting that you think about it. Listen to the audio to hear the same lick played with Fender single coils first and then Gibson humbuckers.

Perhaps the best advice I could give regarding equipment and tone is to listen carefully. Listen to records of players you love and then listen closely to your playing. Record yourself often (if possible) and try to be critical about your sound. Once you find the tone or tones you really like, you'll have a goal in mind, which is the first step in attaining it.

LESSON #51: KICK-STARTER 1

Most musicians profess that they play the blues by tapping deep emotions and feelings, which is hard to convey on paper. We hear all kinds of talk about studying scales and theories, but the surprising fact is that a lot of the great blues players don't theoretically know how to describe what they're doing. They usually say they find the notes that sound good and just give it everything they've got.

I walked off the stage once and a well-known blues musician met me with, "It's not about the scales, it's about the licks." Perhaps all the scales I was practicing were showing up in the performance? Of course that was happening! Students come in explaining they've practiced their scales and positions, but don't know what to do with them. Well, to coin the well-known blues musician, "It's not about the scales, it's about the licks!" So let's "kick start" our blues lines by learning some riffs and concepts that are commonly heard in the blues.

The Basic Idea

Kick-starters are what I call the notes that get me into a phrase. I start by playing the same series of notes (my "kick-starter"), but finish with a different line. There are endless melodies we can do this with in all styles of music, and the blues shares this universal approach.

Licks

Here are some kick-starters in the key of A to get you going. To avoid getting bogged down, I'm going to go easy on theory, but I will say we're using mainly major and minor pentatonic scales in order to create these sounds.

LICK 1



Moderately

A7

T
A
B

9 11 10 13 10 12 11 10

LICK 2



Moderately

A7

T
A
B

9 11 10 12 11 10 13 10

LICK 3



Moderately

A7

T
A
B

9 11 10 10 12 8 9 10

LISTEN TO THE MUSIC!

After playing the blues on the electric guitar in hundreds of shows, and giving thousands of guitar lessons in this style, I am attempting to share in these written lessons what has been passed on to me by other guitarists and musicians. But there also has to be a great deal of listening in order to get a feel for this music. If you haven't already done a lot of listening, go online or to a store and get some recordings of artists like B.B. King, Freddie King, Albert King, T-Bone Walker, Michael Bloomfield, and the many other musicians that have created this legacy. Just go to the "blues" category and you'll find them.

LICK 4

TRACK 1

0:15

Moderately

A7

T 9 11 10 12 11 9 10 11

A

B

LICK 5

TRACK 1

0:21

Moderately

A7

T 9 11 10 10 10 13 10 12 10

A

B

LICK 6

TRACK 1

0:26

Moderately

A7

T 9 11 10 8 9 10 11 12 10

A

B

LICK 7

TRACK 1

0:31

Moderately

A7

T 9 11 10 14 12 14 13 12 10 11 10

A

B

I'd like to think we were on a porch out in the country and I was sharing this stuff with you. After the lesson, you run home and practice all the riffs you learned.

When I was traveling in India, I took some music lessons. As I was writing down the lesson on a notepad, the teacher remarked, "What are these bits of paper?" He expected me to go straight back to my hotel room to practice and memorize all the information he had shared. You need to get it in your head and hands! I'm hoping you do the same, so get cracking and learn the riffs.

LESSON #52: KICK-STARTER 2

The first blues legend I saw in concert was Albert King. It was at the Shrine Exposition Hall in Los Angeles around 1968, and King was the opening act for Iron Butterfly and Creedence Clearwater Revival. I was 14 years old at the time, and I thought he would be OK for a few songs, but I really wanted to get on with the show and see Iron Butterfly. But when King walked onto the stage dressed in a suit and tie carrying his Gibson Flying V I knew something was up. With the first note and the first bend, he commanded his instrument and got his soulful story across and that was it; I was hooked! Sweat was dripping from his face and by the time his set ended he was ringing wet and I was totally stoked with inspiration!

Albert King “kick-started” my interest in the blues, which is half the battle. Since the blues is a medium of improvisation (and of knowing standard licks or riffs), the other half of the battle is you’ve got to learn and practice the licks. I’ve found that a great way to expand my playing is to use what I call “kick-starters.” Kick-starters are several notes that get you into a line, then you finish with a different phrase. When you restate a riff in the blues you can rephrase it and come up with fresh ideas every time.

Licks

These kick-starters are based on the A minor pentatonic scale in position #1 (the standard blues “box” position). This is where most guitarists start as far as lead and solo playing is concerned. Learn the riffs and convert scale practice into melodies as soon as you can. These would sound good over an A minor or an A7 chord.

LICK 1



Musical notation for Lick 1. The top staff is in 4/4 time, showing a sequence of eighth notes with triplets: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter). The bottom staff shows the fret positions: T (open), 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 8, 5, 5, 7, 5, 5, 7.

LICK 2



Musical notation for Lick 2. The top staff is in 4/4 time, showing a sequence of eighth notes with triplets: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), followed by a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows the fret positions: T (open), 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 5, 8, 5, 5, 7, 8, 5, 7, 5, 7.

LICK 3



Musical notation for Lick 3. The top staff is in 4/4 time, showing a sequence of eighth notes with triplets: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter), followed by a quarter rest. The bottom staff shows the fret positions: T (open), 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 8, 5, 5, 8, 5, 5, 7, 5, 8, 5.

Slowly



The first system of the musical score for 'The Wind' is shown. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets. The first measure contains a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. The second measure contains a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note D5. The third measure contains a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, and a quarter note G5. The fourth measure contains a quarter note A5, a quarter note B5, and a quarter note C6. The fifth measure contains a quarter note D6, a quarter note E6, and a quarter note F#6. The sixth measure contains a quarter note G6, a quarter note A6, and a quarter note B6. The seventh measure contains a quarter note C7, a quarter note D7, and a quarter note E7. The eighth measure contains a quarter note F#7, a quarter note G7, and a quarter note A7. The ninth measure contains a quarter note B7, a quarter note C8, and a quarter note D8. The tenth measure contains a quarter note E8, a quarter note F#8, and a quarter note G8. The eleventh measure contains a quarter note A8, a quarter note B8, and a quarter note C9. The twelfth measure contains a quarter note D9, a quarter note E9, and a quarter note F#9. The thirteenth measure contains a quarter note G9, a quarter note A9, and a quarter note B9. The fourteenth measure contains a quarter note C10, a quarter note D10, and a quarter note E10. The fifteenth measure contains a quarter note F#10, a quarter note G10, and a quarter note A10. The sixteenth measure contains a quarter note B10, a quarter note C11, and a quarter note D11. The seventeenth measure contains a quarter note E11, a quarter note F#11, and a quarter note G11. The eighteenth measure contains a quarter note A11, a quarter note B11, and a quarter note C12. The nineteenth measure contains a quarter note D12, a quarter note E12, and a quarter note F#12. The twentieth measure contains a quarter note G12, a quarter note A12, and a quarter note B12. The twenty-first measure contains a quarter note C13, a quarter note D13, and a quarter note E13. The twenty-second measure contains a quarter note F#13, a quarter note G13, and a quarter note A13. The twenty-third measure contains a quarter note B13, a quarter note C14, and a quarter note D14. The twenty-fourth measure contains a quarter note E14, a quarter note F#14, and a quarter note G14. The twenty-fifth measure contains a quarter note A14, a quarter note B14, and a quarter note C15. The twenty-sixth measure contains a quarter note D15, a quarter note E15, and a quarter note F#15. The twenty-seventh measure contains a quarter note G15, a quarter note A15, and a quarter note B15. The twenty-eighth measure contains a quarter note C16, a quarter note D16, and a quarter note E16. The twenty-ninth measure contains a quarter note F#16, a quarter note G16, and a quarter note A16. The thirtieth measure contains a quarter note B16, a quarter note C17, and a quarter note D17. The thirty-first measure contains a quarter note E17, a quarter note F#17, and a quarter note G17. The thirty-second measure contains a quarter note A17, a quarter note B17, and a quarter note C18. The thirty-third measure contains a quarter note D18, a quarter note E18, and a quarter note F#18. The thirty-fourth measure contains a quarter note G18, a quarter note A18, and a quarter note B18. The thirty-fifth measure contains a quarter note C19, a quarter note D19, and a quarter note E19. The thirty-sixth measure contains a quarter note F#19, a quarter note G19, and a quarter note A19. The thirty-seventh measure contains a quarter note B19, a quarter note C20, and a quarter note D20. The thirty-eighth measure contains a quarter note E20, a quarter note F#20, and a quarter note G20. The thirty-ninth measure contains a quarter note A20, a quarter note B20, and a quarter note C21. The fortieth measure contains a quarter note D21, a quarter note E21, and a quarter note F#21. The forty-first measure contains a quarter note G21, a quarter note A21, and a quarter note B21. The forty-second measure contains a quarter note C22, a quarter note D22, and a quarter note E22. The forty-third measure contains a quarter note F#22, a quarter note G22, and a quarter note A22. The forty-fourth measure contains a quarter note B22, a quarter note C23, and a quarter note D23. The forty-fifth measure contains a quarter note E23, a quarter note F#23, and a quarter note G23. The forty-sixth measure contains a quarter note A23, a quarter note B23, and a quarter note C24. The forty-seventh measure contains a quarter note D24, a quarter note E24, and a quarter note F#24. The forty-eighth measure contains a quarter note G24, a quarter note A24, and a quarter note B24. The forty-ninth measure contains a quarter note C25, a quarter note D25, and a quarter note E25. The fiftieth measure contains a quarter note F#25, a quarter note G25, and a quarter note A25. The fifty-first measure contains a quarter note B25, a quarter note C26, and a quarter note D26. The fifty-second measure contains a quarter note E26, a quarter note F#26, and a quarter note G26. The fifty-third measure contains a quarter note A26, a quarter note B26, and a quarter note C27. The fifty-fourth measure contains a quarter note D27, a quarter note E27, and a quarter note F#27. The fifty-fifth measure contains a quarter note G27, a quarter note A27, and a quarter note B27. The fifty-sixth measure contains a quarter note C28, a quarter note D28, and a quarter note E28. The fifty-seventh measure contains a quarter note F#28, a quarter note G28, and a quarter note A28. The fifty-eighth measure contains a quarter note B28, a quarter note C29, and a quarter note D29. The fifty-ninth measure contains a quarter note E29, a quarter note F#29, and a quarter note G29. The sixtieth measure contains a quarter note A29, a quarter note B29, and a quarter note C30. The sixty-first measure contains a quarter note D30, a quarter note E30, and a quarter note F#30. The sixty-second measure contains a quarter note G30, a quarter note A30, and a quarter note B30. The sixty-third measure contains a quarter note C31, a quarter note D31, and a quarter note E31. The sixty-fourth measure contains a quarter note F#31, a quarter note G31, and a quarter note A31. The sixty-fifth measure contains a quarter note B31, a quarter note C32, and a quarter note D32. The sixty-sixth measure contains a quarter note E32, a quarter note F#32, and a quarter note G32. The sixty-seventh measure contains a quarter note A32, a quarter note B32, and a quarter note C33. The sixty-eighth measure contains a quarter note D33, a quarter note E33, and a quarter note F#33. The sixty-ninth measure contains a quarter note G33, a quarter note A33, and a quarter note B33. The seventieth measure contains a quarter note C34, a quarter note D34, and a quarter note E34. The seventy-first measure contains a quarter note F#34, a quarter note G34, and a quarter note A34. The seventy-second measure contains a quarter note B34, a quarter note C35, and a quarter note D35. The seventy-third measure contains a quarter note E35, a quarter note F#35, and a quarter note G35. The seventy-fourth measure contains a quarter note A35, a quarter note B35, and a quarter note C36. The seventy-fifth measure contains a quarter note D36, a quarter note E36, and a quarter note F#36. The seventy-sixth measure contains a quarter note G36, a quarter note A36, and a quarter note B36. The seventy-seventh measure contains a quarter note C37, a quarter note D37, and a quarter note E37. The seventy-eighth measure contains a quarter note F#37, a quarter note G37, and a quarter note A37. The seventy-ninth measure contains a quarter note B37, a quarter note C38, and a quarter note D38. The eightieth measure contains a quarter note E38, a quarter note F#38, and a quarter note G38. The eighty-first measure contains a quarter note A38, a quarter note B38, and a quarter note C39. The eighty-second measure contains a quarter note D39, a quarter note E39, and a quarter note F#39. The eighty-third measure contains a quarter note G39, a quarter note A39, and a quarter note B39. The eighty-fourth measure contains a quarter note C40, a quarter note D40, and a quarter note E40. The eighty-fifth measure contains a quarter note F#40, a quarter note G40, and a quarter note A40. The eighty-sixth measure contains a quarter note B40, a quarter note C41, and a quarter note D41. The eighty-seventh measure contains a quarter note E41, a quarter note F#41, and a quarter note G41. The eighty-eighth measure contains a quarter note A41, a quarter note B41, and a quarter note C42. The eighty-ninth measure contains a quarter note D42, a quarter note E42, and a quarter note F#42. The ninetieth measure contains a quarter note G42, a quarter note A42, and a quarter note B42. The hundredth measure contains a quarter note C43, a quarter note D43, and a quarter note E43. The hundred-first measure contains a quarter note F#43, a quarter note G43, and a quarter note A43. The hundred-second measure contains a quarter note B43, a quarter note C44, and a quarter note D44. The hundred-third measure contains a quarter note E44, a quarter note F#44, and a quarter note G44. The hundred-fourth measure contains a quarter note A44, a quarter note B44, and a quarter note C45. The hundred-fifth measure contains a quarter note D45, a quarter note E45, and a quarter note F#45. The hundred-sixth measure contains a quarter note G45, a quarter note A45, and a quarter note B45. The hundred-seventh measure contains a quarter note C46, a quarter note D46, and a quarter note E46. The hundred-eighth measure contains a quarter note F#46, a quarter note G46, and a quarter note A46. The hundred-ninth measure contains a quarter note B46, a quarter note C47, and a quarter note D47. The hundred-tieth measure contains a quarter note E47, a quarter note F#47, and a quarter note G47. The hundred-first measure contains a quarter note A47, a quarter note B47, and a quarter note C48. The hundred-second measure contains a quarter note D48, a quarter note E48, and a quarter note F#48. The hundred-third measure contains a quarter note G48, a quarter note A48, and a quarter note B48. The hundred-fourth measure contains a quarter note C49, a quarter note D49, and a quarter note E49. The hundred-fifth measure contains a quarter note F#49, a quarter note G49, and a quarter note A49. The hundred-sixth measure contains a quarter note B49, a quarter note C50, and a quarter note D50. The hundred-seventh measure contains a quarter note E50, a quarter note F#50, and a quarter note G50. The hundred-eighth measure contains a quarter note A50, a quarter note B50, and a quarter note C51. The hundred-ninth measure contains a quarter note D51, a quarter note E51, and a quarter note F#51. The hundred-tieth measure contains a quarter note G51, a quarter note A51, and a quarter note B51. The hundred-first measure contains a quarter note C52, a quarter note D52, and a quarter note E52. The hundred-second measure contains a quarter note F#52, a quarter note G52, and a quarter note A52. The hundred-third measure contains a quarter note B52, a quarter note C53, and a quarter note D53. The hundred-fourth measure contains a quarter note E53, a quarter note F#53, and a quarter note G53. The hundred-fifth measure contains a quarter note A53, a quarter note B53, and a quarter note C54. The hundred-sixth measure contains a quarter note D54, a quarter note E54, and a quarter note F#54. The hundred-seventh measure contains a quarter note G54, a quarter note A54, and a quarter note B54. The hundred-eighth measure contains a quarter note C55, a quarter note D55, and a quarter note E55. The hundred-ninth measure contains a quarter note F#55, a quarter note G55, and a quarter note A55. The hundred-tieth measure contains a quarter note B55, a quarter note C56, and a quarter note D56. The hundred-first measure contains a quarter note E56, a quarter note F#56, and a quarter note G56. The hundred-second measure contains a quarter note A56, a quarter note B56, and a quarter note C57. The hundred-third measure contains a quarter note D57, a quarter note E57, and a quarter note F#57. The hundred-fourth measure contains a quarter note G57, a quarter note A57, and a quarter note B57. The hundred-fifth measure contains a quarter note C58, a quarter note D58, and a quarter note E58. The hundred-sixth measure contains a quarter note F#58, a quarter note G58, and a quarter note A58. The hundred-seventh measure contains a quarter note B58, a quarter note C59, and a quarter note D59. The hundred-eighth measure contains a quarter note E59, a quarter note F#59, and a quarter note G59. The hundred-ninth measure contains a quarter note A59, a quarter note B59, and a quarter note C60. The hundred-tieth measure contains a quarter note D60, a quarter note E60, and a quarter note F#60. The hundred-first measure contains a quarter note G60, a quarter note A60, and a quarter note B60. The hundred-second measure contains a quarter note C61, a quarter note D61, and a quarter note E61. The hundred-third measure contains a quarter note F#61, a quarter note G61, and a quarter note A61. The hundred-fourth measure contains a quarter note B61, a quarter note C62, and a quarter note D62. The hundred-fifth measure contains a quarter note E62, a quarter note F#62, and a quarter note G62. The hundred-sixth measure contains a quarter note A62, a quarter note B62, and a quarter note C63. The hundred-seventh measure contains a quarter note D63, a quarter note E63, and a quarter note F#63. The hundred-eighth measure contains a quarter note G63, a quarter note A63, and a quarter note B63. The hundred-ninth measure contains a quarter note C64, a quarter note D64, and a quarter note E64. The hundred-tieth measure contains a quarter note F#64, a quarter note G64, and a quarter note A64. The hundred-first measure contains a quarter note B64, a quarter note C65, and a quarter note D65. The hundred-second measure contains a quarter note E65, a quarter note F#65, and a quarter note G65. The hundred-third measure contains a quarter note A65, a quarter note B65, and a quarter note C66. The hundred-fourth measure contains a quarter note D66, a quarter note E66, and a quarter

Slowly



The first system of the musical score for 'The Wind' is shown. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time. The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. This is followed by a triplet of eighth notes: G4, F4, and E4. The system ends with a quarter rest.

Slowly



The first system of the musical score for 'The Wind' is shown. It consists of a treble clef staff in 4/4 time and a guitar tablature staff below it. The treble staff contains a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4 and B4 beamed together, then a quarter note C5. This is followed by a triplet of eighth notes D5, E5, and F5, then another triplet of eighth notes G5, A5, and B5, and finally a quarter note C6. The tablature staff shows the corresponding fret numbers: 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 8, 5, and 7.

Slowly



The first system of the musical score for 'The Wind' is shown. It consists of a single staff in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with triplets indicated by a '3' and a bracket. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each note: 5, 5, 5, 8, 5, 8, 8, 5, 8, 7, 5, 5, 7, and 7.

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LESSON #53: KICK-STARTER 3

When blues was on the rise and becoming internationally popular, most people agree B.B. King was probably the top blues entertainer and most responsible for its success. He was a handsome, well-dressed figure and could sing with the power like that of any gospel singer. Once when Buddy Guy performed with B.B. King he said, "We're all trying to sound like him." The point of me saying this is that we should all have a familiar understanding of how B.B. King plays the blues in order to sound like a studied blues musician. If you can't play some B.B. King licks your audience might not think you're much of a blues musician. That's how popular his blues sound is!

But before you can sound like B.B., you've got to have a stable of standard licks under your belt, and using kick-starters is a great way to build up your stable of licks. Kick-starters are several notes that get you into a line, then you finish with a different phrase.

Licks

These licks have a sound that's very characteristic of the blues. The kick-starter at the beginning of each line uses the major and minor 3rd of the same key. This is constantly coming through the music if you listen to a lot of professional players. These licks will sound good over A7 type chords.

LICK 1

TRACK 3

0:00

Moderately slow

CD 2



Tablature for Lick 1: T 5 6 5 7 5 | 8 5 7 7 5 5 | 7 5

LICK 2

TRACK 3

0:08

Moderately slow

CD 2



Tablature for Lick 2: T 5 6 5 7 5 | 5 7 8 7 5 7 | 5 6 7

LICK 3

TRACK 3

0:16

Moderately slow

CD 2



Tablature for Lick 3: T 5 6 5 7 5 | 5 7 8 5 7 5

LICK 4

TRACK 3

0:22

Moderately slow



CD 2

5 6 5 7 5 | 5 6 7 8 6 7 | 5

LICK 5

TRACK 3

0:29

Moderately slow



CD 2

5 6 5 7 5 | 8 5 5 7 8 7 | 5 7

LICK 6

TRACK 3

0:36

Moderately slow



CD 2

5 6 5 7 5 | 5 7 5 7 5 6 | 7

LICK 7

TRACK 3

0:43

Moderately slow



CD 2

5 6 5 7 5 | 8 5 7 7 5 6 | 7

LICK 8

TRACK 3

0:50

Moderately slow



CD 2

5 6 5 7 5 | 7 8 9 5 7 5 | 5

In these kick-starters, I've stayed away from the five colorations (bends, slides, vibrato, hammer-ons, and pull-offs) to focus on the notes. Once you hear a lot of melodies created from our major and minor pentatonic scales, you then add or play them with what I call the five colorations. The colorations will come after you learn an order of notes that could be used in the creation of a blues guitar style.

LESSON #54: KICK-STARTER 4

My goal throughout these lessons is to get you in the habit of learning licks rather than just practicing scales all the time. It's surprising how many students come for lessons that know scales, but no riffs or licks. Repeating what I call "kick-starters" helps you get some riffs into your head and hands. Kick-starters are several notes that get you into a line, then you finish with a different phrase.

Licks

These following lines are mostly above the 12th fret in the key of A. One important blues tip or rule: *If it's a minor chord use only minor notes. If it's a dominant seventh type chord, you can use major or minor type notes.*

We think of the minor notes against a dominant seventh chord as blue or bluesy sounding. The art of mixing major and minor pentatonic scales or sounds is one of the main ingredients of the blues. Most of these riffs are minor, but can you find the major sounding riff(s)?

LICK 1

TRACK 4
0:00
Slowly
CD 2

LICK 2

TRACK 4
0:10
Slowly
CD 2

LICK 3

TRACK 4
0:19
Slowly
CD 2

LEARN FROM THE MASTERS

How badly do you want to be a good blues guitarist? John Mayall told Eric Clapton to lock himself in a room and not to come out until he was ready. I think Eric's grandmother bought him a tape recorder and he went to work on studying the licks and riffs of the great American blues artists. After months of practicing and studying, he got the music of the great ones together and emerged to become the most popular blues and rock guitarist in history. Eric said, "No matter how hard I try to sound like B.B. King, it comes out sounding like Eric Clapton." So he's emphasizing the importance of studying classic riffs and the lines from the founding players. You often hear people saying you have to go to the roots of the music before you emerge as "your own" player with your own identity and sound.

LICK 4

TRACK 4

0:29

Slowly



CD 2

4/4

14 13 15 15 12 13 15 12 13 15 12 13 14

T
A
B

LICK 5

TRACK 4

0:38

Slowly



CD 2

4/4

14 13 15 14 14 16 14 17 16 14 16 14 16 14

T
A
B

LICK 6

TRACK 4

0:47

Slowly



CD 2

4/4

14 13 15 14 14 12 14 12 10 12 12

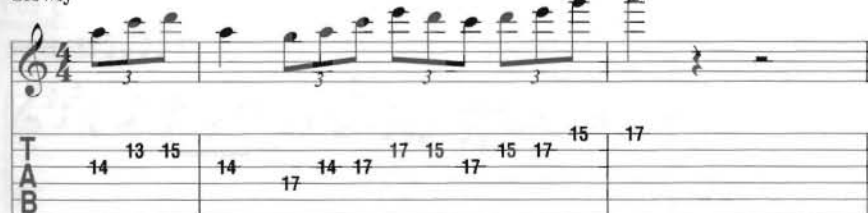
T
A
B

LICK 7

TRACK 4

0:55

Slowly



CD 2

4/4

14 13 15 14 17 14 17 17 15 17 15 17 15 17

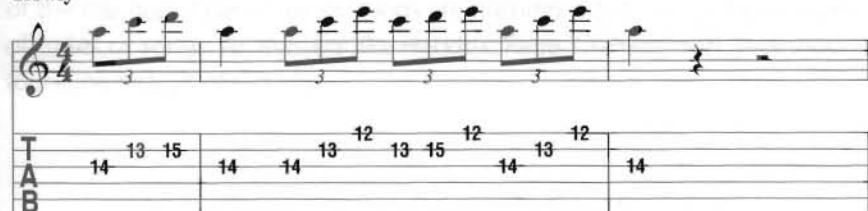
T
A
B

LICK 8

TRACK 4

1:04

Slowly



CD 2

4/4

14 13 15 14 14 13 12 13 15 12 13 12 14

T
A
B

LESSON #55:

KICK-STARTER 5— DOUBLE-STOP 3RDS

To play double stops, you simply play two notes at a time. In these examples, the notes are called 3rds because they are three notes apart in diatonic theory. When I hear this sound, I think of Muddy Waters and blues bands like Canned Heat.

Kick-starters are several notes that get you into a line, then you finish with a different phrase. I'm using the kick-starter repetition exercises to try and make sure you never forget how to play these 3rd forms. When I've shown this to students, I often hear them say, "Oh, is *that* how you do that?"

Licks

These lines are in the key of A, and will sound good over an A7 type chord. When I say "A7 type," that includes other chords from the A7 family, like A9, A11, A13, A7#9, etc.

You can strum through the double stops with a pick or pluck them with the other fingers that aren't holding the pick (hybrid picking). Experiment and find a way that you like. It's totally up to you. I like to play without a pick and hit the lower (single) notes between double stops with my thumb, using my fingers for the double stops. Usually it's my index and middle fingers (but even that can change). There's really not just one way to play these things.

LICK 1

TRACK 5

0:00

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = )




LICK 2

TRACK 5

0:10

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = )




LICK 3

TRACK 5

0:18

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = )



LICK 4

TRACK 5
0:26

Slowly (♩ = ½ ♩)

LICK 5

TRACK 5
0:34

Slowly (♩ = ½ ♩)

LICK 6

TRACK 5
0:42

Slowly (♩ = ½ ♩)

LICK 7

TRACK 5
0:52

Slowly (♩ = ½ ♩)

LICK 8

TRACK 5
1:03

Slowly (♩ = ½ ♩)

The song "Mannish Boy" by Muddy Waters has a theme very similar to the kick-starter that's at the front of all these lines. Most of the themes of classic blues songs are nothing more than popular blues riffs and licks repeatedly used within the melodies of tunes or songs. As masters like Hendrix, Page, Clapton, and Beck would say: "Study the blues. Learn the riffs. Listen to the founding fathers of the blues."

LESSON #56: SLIDES

Sliding around on the fretboard should be looked at as a way to loosen up your playing. B.B. King said that since he didn't play with a bottleneck or a glass slide, he came up with the vibrato and worked on sliding around as a way to mimic that other very loose style.

All the coloration techniques take a lot of practice. They are the spices that give the blues all its character. This is where injecting your personality into the sound of the music happens. Anyone and everyone can play straight by just picking or plucking the notes without any enhancement, but we would be a society of robots playing the guitar if that were the case—with each person playing exactly the same way as everyone else. I urge you to work as hard at this as you would in memorizing a lengthy piece of classical music.

Slide Types

There are two types of slides to work on in these exercises; one is what I call a rhythmic slide and the other an on-the-beat slide (gliss slide, or grace-note slide). The melody of a rhythmic slide can be played with or without the slide. In other words, the second note following the slide will occur without you picking it, and both notes have their own rhythmic value. (The sustain from the first note just carries over.) The on-the-beat slide happens as you're hitting the note. It's very quick, but an effective way to add color to your playing. (Listen to the CD if you have trouble understanding the difference between these two types of slides.)

Of all the great players that come to mind as far as slides are concerned, I think Dick Dale, "The King of Surf Guitar," wins the prize (even though he's not known for being a blues guitarist!).

Rhythmic Slide Licks

These examples are in the key of A.

LICK 1

TRACK 6

0:00

CD 2

Moderately

Musical notation for Lick 1 in A major, 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). The guitar tablature below shows the fret positions: 7, 5, 7, 9, 8, 9, 7, 5, 7. Slurs indicate slides between 7-9, 8-9, and 7-5.

LICK 2

TRACK 6

0:06

CD 2

Moderately

Musical notation for Lick 2 in A major, 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). The guitar tablature below shows the fret positions: 2, 4, 6, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 6, 4, 2. Slurs indicate slides between 4-6, 5-7, and 6-4.

LICK 3

TRACK 6

0:12

CD 2

Moderately

Musical notation for Lick 3 in A major, 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). The guitar tablature below shows the fret positions: 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 7, 5, 7. Slurs indicate slides between 5-7 and 7-5.

LICK 4

TRACK 6

0:18

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 5

TRACK 6

0:26

CD 2

Moderately

SLIDE EXERCISE

Try targeting a note way up the fretboard and sliding to it from a lower note. You have to keep the pressure on the string as you're moving your finger along. Try doing the opposite from high to low. Eventually you can slide two notes or even an entire chord around.

On-the-Beat Slide Licks

LICK 6

TRACK 6

0:32

CD 2

Slowly

LICK 7

TRACK 6

0:40

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 8

TRACK 6

0:46

CD 2

Moderately

Listen to the great blues players and see if you can hear when they're sliding or bending notes. Being able to recognize these sounds will help you in mastering the technique. Good luck and work hard!

LESSON #57: HAMMER-ONS

The hammer-on gives you another way to play two notes. You could just pick each note or you could hammer the second note with your finger. By quickly slapping the next note with your second, third, or fourth finger, while you're holding the sustaining note with your first finger, you can sound out the next note. It's a smooth sound and, once you get good at it, you can play these hammer-ons as fast as lightning. Without developing fast alternate picking you can play fast passages by using hammer-ons. The use and sound of hammer-ons is very popular in blues guitar playing and not just an aid to playing fast without good picking technique. I saw Dave Mason in concert and his style had beautiful hammer-ons very tastefully placed throughout his solos.

Exercises

I've used the A minor pentatonic scale to demonstrate this sound. Like everything else you learn on guitar, hammer-ons require practice. What's great is that it's your hands that make the sound, so you feel really connected to the instrument once you get these going.

EXERCISE 1

TRACK 7

0:00

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 2

TRACK 7

0:06

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 3

TRACK 7

0:11

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 4

TRACK 7

0:16

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 5

TRACK 7

0:21

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 6

TRACK 7

0:28

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 7

TRACK 7

0:35

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 8

This final exercise features on-the-beat (or grace-note) hammer-ons.

TRACK 7

0:41

Moderately

I dropped my pick so many times I started plucking the strings with my thumb. As it turned out, I could speed through lines using hammer-ons, so it hardly mattered about not having the pick in my hand! There are great blues players that didn't use a pick—Albert Collins and Albert King just to name a couple. When you learn pull-offs and hammer-ons, you can choose when you need to pick a note and when you don't. Work at it!

LESSON #58: PULL-OFFS

You need hand and finger strength to execute a pull-off clearly with all the notes sounding out equally. The pull-off is achieved by playing a note, then pulling (or dragging) that finger away off the fretboard so that it sounds a lower note on the same string. The lower note must be fretted *before* the pull-off, and you can either pull off to another finger or an open string. Usually it's the first or index finger that's waiting in place, but any combination of fingers can be used.

PRACTICE MAKES A PRO

People have asked me about working out their hands with these body-building devices, but nothing takes the place of practicing on your instrument. One of America's greatest classical musicians, Nathaniel Rosen, lived next door to me and I could hear him practicing his cello every morning. He never skipped his practice session. One day I asked him about staying in shape and he said, "Practice. I practice at least four hours a day." Even if you workout, you still have to put in the hours on the instrument. Without a doubt, most students don't practice enough to reach a professional level, but that's not everyone's goal. If it was that easy, *everyone* would be doing it because it can be so much fun!

Exercises

These examples/exercises/riffs are in the key of A. I like working in A because it is centrally located on the fretboard.

EXERCISE 1



Exercise 1 is a guitar exercise in 4/4 time, key of A. The notation shows a single melodic line on the treble clef staff. The fretboard diagram below indicates the following sequence of notes and frets: 7th fret (string 4), 5th fret (string 4), 7th fret (string 4), 5th fret (string 4), 8th fret (string 4), 5th fret (string 4), 8th fret (string 4), 5th fret (string 4), 7th fret (string 4), 5th fret (string 4), 7th fret (string 4).

EXERCISE 2



Exercise 2 is a guitar exercise in 4/4 time, key of A. The notation shows a single melodic line on the treble clef staff. The fretboard diagram below indicates the following sequence of notes and frets: 8th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4), 8th fret (string 4), 9th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4), 8th fret (string 4), 9th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4).

EXERCISE 3



Exercise 3 is a guitar exercise in 4/4 time, key of A. The notation shows a single melodic line on the treble clef staff. The fretboard diagram below indicates the following sequence of notes and frets: 10th fret (string 4), 13th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4), 11th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4), 13th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4), 13th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4), 12th fret (string 4), 10th fret (string 4).

EXERCISE 4

TRACK 8

0:20

Moderately

EXERCISE 5

TRACK 8

0:26

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 6

TRACK 8

0:32

Moderately

EXERCISE 7

TRACK 8

0:38

Moderately fast

EXERCISE 8

TRACK 8

0:43

Moderately

INSPIRE OTHERS AND LET THEM INSPIRE YOU

Watching people perform is an important learning experience and we can pick up clues as to how the guitar is properly played. Don't set out on your own or hide in a closet until you've had plenty of exposure to musicians you've liked and have learned how they arrived at their command of the instrument. Go to a music store and be a wallflower. Hang out and look around. Be observant. You'd be amazed at the number of talented people there are in the world and in your neighborhood. Getting together with other inspired people is a tremendous help and can prove to be some of the most fun you can have in music. Some people might put you off, but don't give up. There's lots of like-minded students of the guitar floating around.

LESSON #59: BENDS

The bend is perhaps the single most iconic sound of the blues. It's not easy to master, especially because you have to know how far to bend the string for each bend. To really know how far to go, you have to know what your destination pitch sounds like before you get there (you have to hear it, or "know" it, in your head). And not only do you need to know where you're going as far as the sound is concerned, but that also has to be combined with enough hand strength to perform the bend.

Playing Bends

It's difficult to bend notes with just one finger, so when you bend with your third (ring) finger, reinforce it with your middle finger (and even your first finger) on the same string just behind, or to the side of, your third finger. Some people pull the note down or away from their face, but I strongly suggest you learn how to bend by pushing the note *up* or toward your face. (If you try to bend a note on the first string by pulling down, it can pop right off the fretboard, creating a pretty nasty sound!) The string has to move while the neck of the guitar remains stationary. Watch videos of guitarists to help understand how this is done. Jeff Beck called the three-fingered bend a "power bend."

I get leverage for my bends by having the thumb of my fretting hand rest over the top of the neck, loosely locked in place. It's used as a grip and the pressure of the grip varies depending on how hard the note is to bend. Since the tension of bending notes is different everywhere up and down the neck of the guitar, you have to adjust and re-adjust to the tensions and positions. I always tell people it's like working with a brand new length of rope. You have to keep twisting it and bending it until it gets flexible. If you thought this was going to be easy, think again!

Bending Licks

For each lick, I've first given a musical example of how the melody should sound without the bend, then followed by an example of how it sounds with the bend(s) added. All these examples are in the key of C. Except for the final lick, all the phrases use the third finger to perform the bend.

LICK 1

In Lick 1, check out how the tab shows an arrow with the number "1" for each bend. That's to indicate a whole step bend (the distance of two frets).



Moderately
without bends

Musical notation for Lick 1 without bends. The staff shows a melody in 4/4 time. The guitar tab below shows the fret numbers: 10, 8, 10, 12, 10, 12, 10, 8, 10.

Moderately
with bends

Musical notation for Lick 1 with bends. The staff shows the same melody as the previous example, but with bends indicated by arrows and the number "1" above the notes. The guitar tab below shows the fret numbers: 10, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 8, 10.

LICK 2

Listen to the CD to hear how to play the pre-bends in Lick 2 (also called "reverse bends").



Moderately
without bends

Musical notation for Lick 2 without bends. The staff shows a melody in 4/4 time. The guitar tab below shows the fret numbers: 10, 8, 12, 10, 12, 10, 8, 10.

Moderately
with bends

Musical notation for Lick 2 with bends. The staff shows the same melody as the previous example, but with pre-bends indicated by arrows and the number "1" above the notes. The guitar tab below shows the fret numbers: 10, 8, 10, (10), 10, (10), 8, 10.

LICK 3

Lick 3 features a bend and release.

TRACK 8

0:20

Moderately

without bends

Moderately

with bends

LICK 4

Notice that it says "1/2" on top of the curved arrow in this next example (instead of "1"). This is a half-step bend (the distance of one fret). Listen to the music example and then try and duplicate it. It's ear training. You hear the notes the same way a singer has to hear them.

TRACK 8

0:29

Moderately

without bends

Moderately

with bends

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

Most students don't spend the necessary time it takes to refine note bending. I used to watch TV programs like "The Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson and practice one B.B. King riff the entire show. Later in my career, I was in a recording session and was warming up with some of those B.B. King riffs. The producer heard me and said, "You practiced those a lot." He could tell, and so should those that hear you.

LICK 5

TRACK 9

0:40

Moderately

without bends

Moderately

with bends

LICK 6

TRACK 9

0:52

Moderately

without bends

Moderately

with bends

LESSON #60: REVISITING VIBRATO

Vibrato is the most overlooked aspect of guitar playing. It really isn't musical notes. It's just a way to tamper with the sound to get a new and fresh result. In other words, there aren't classes with books where you study vibrato. We have to experiment and listen until we're satisfied we have something that sounds good.

Like the bend, vibrato gives the guitar personality and smoothes out any kinks you may have in your riffs and style—especially if you like using a lot of distortion. If you play one note with a lot of distortion and let it sustain, it usually sounds slightly out of tune. To amplify distorted sounds brings out any discrepancies in the harmonics of the tone. However, you can smooth out the distorted sound with vibrato, and that is key in controlling the electric guitar.

Licks

I strongly recommend not using just your fingers to pull on strings to create a vibrato. It will slow you down, break the flow of your playing, and even cramp your fingers. The arm and wrist can create a slow, or fast, even rhythmic vibration. Both are needed for an overall successful result. You need a pulsating vibration. It doesn't have to lock onto the rhythm of the music as if you're playing vibrato with the beat of a song. However, it does have to vibrate mechanically and evenly. The following licks predominately use the hand, wrist, or arm (or a combination of those) for the vibrato, but see the sidebar for more ideas on producing vibrato.

Listen closely to the CD that comes with this book to help you hear how to recreate the vibrato in these licks. I feel that vibrato is the #1 key element in good electric guitar music.

LICK 1

TRACK 10
0:00

Moderately slow



CD 2

Tablature for Lick 1 (4/4 time):

String	Notes
T	5 8 5 8 5 7 5 8 5 7 5 7 7
A	
B	

LICK 2

TRACK 10
0:12

Moderately slow



CD 2

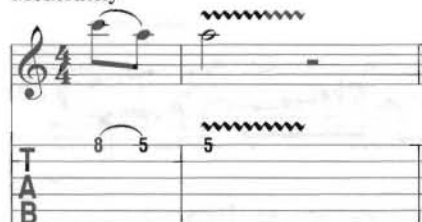
Tablature for Lick 2 (4/4 time):

String	Notes
T	7 5 7 5 7 7 5 7 5 8 5 7 5 8 5 8 5
A	
B	

LICK 3

TRACK 10
0:23

Moderately



CD 2

Tablature for Lick 3 (4/4 time):

String	Notes
T	8 5 5
A	
B	

LICK 4

TRACK 10
0:28

Moderately



CD 2

Tablature for Lick 4 (4/4 time):

String	Notes
T	5 8 8
A	
B	

THE MANY WAYS TO CREATE VIBRATO

There are different ways to create a usable vibrato, and for me as an instructor it's a challenge to teach. It's amazing to see some of the mechanical devices people have invented in order to add vibrato to their instrument and thus enhance their music. Here are all the ways I can think of to create vibrato (maybe you can come up with even more!):

The Whammy Bar: The Fender Stratocaster comes with a whammy bar (sometimes called a vibrato or tremolo bar). By pushing and pulling the bar, you achieve a beautiful vibrato that goes lower and higher than the note you play. You can also add vibrato to a whole chord. (With strong fret-hand technique, you can vibrato a chord without a whammy bar, but it's difficult and takes time to develop.) Watch a video of Hank Marvin for some great whammy bar vibrato examples.

Arm Vibrato: This usually makes me think of Eric Clapton. He will sustain a note and rock the string back and forth (or up and down) with his arm. You have to keep the finger that's playing the note stiff and not grip the neck tightly in order to allow your hand to rock up and down. Watch a video of Mr. Clapton and you'll see what I mean.

Butterfly Vibrato: Here, you hold the note with the side of your finger and use the rotational muscles of your wrist. The word butterfly is used because you can vibrato the note so fast your hand looks like a blur. Your left hand might barely touch the guitar while you loosely rotate your wrist all the while keeping your finger on the note that's sustaining. B.B. King may have invented this, and is a prime example, and Jimi Hendrix also used butterfly vibrato.

Push Vibrato: Simply push the note up towards your face and release it, allowing it to go back to its position without changing much of anything. This takes finger and hand strength, but is the most economical way of producing vibrato. The advantage of having this is it's possible to apply it while you're playing a fast run or line. This is an important vibrato for rock, fusion, and heavy metal players.

LICK 5

TRACK 10

0:33

Moderately

LICK 6

TRACK 10

0:38

Moderately

LICK 7

TRACK 10

0:44

Moderately slow

LICK 8

TRACK 10

0:50

Moderately

LESSON #61: COLOR COMBOS

Not all students of guitar want to write their own lines or create their own style. Some people love classic recordings, they're perfectly content to copy those, and there is nothing whatsoever wrong with that. But in order to improvise solos and freely jam, you need to study some basic theories and get an insight into how to go about doing it. One great way to add your own voice to a line is by adding your own colorations to any given line. When I talk about "colorations," I mean these five basic techniques: hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, vibrato, and bends. In this lesson, we'll add all of the colorations except bends to several lines.

Licks

Each of the following lines is first shown without any colorations. Then they are shown with the additions of hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and vibrato. Always try vibrato whenever you have an opportunity to sustain a note. Add the vibrato after you play the note—not during or before you pick it. This enhances the tone, and won't make it sound like you're overusing it. You can cheapen the riff by adding vibrato too quickly or while you're picking it. Experiment with this concept.

LICK 1

TRACK 11
0:00

CD 2

Moderately
no color

TAB

TRACK 11
0:11

CD 2

Moderately
with color

TAB

LICK 2

TRACK 11
0:24

CD 2

Moderately
no color

TAB

TRACK 11
0:35

CD 2

Moderately
with color

TAB

THE BLUES CAN BUY YOU DINNER

When I was 21, I was on the road with a band from New Orleans. We were playing in Dallas at a nightclub associated with the Ramada Inn. I joined the band in Los Angeles and had no idea what kind of audiences we were going to perform to, but this particular club was known for its late-hour live blues. Around 11:00 P.M., the place filled up with blues lovers and there were several employees in the crowd that just got off work in time to come in and enjoy the music. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but we started playing blues tunes that we hadn't rehearsed. I instantly noticed the warm response from the audience and I loosened up a bit. During a slow blues tune I decided it was okay to let it all hang out and we basically lit the place up. After the show, the chef became my best friend of the night and cooked me the best southern-style food I ever tasted! That friendship was well worth all the hours of practice.

LICK 3

TRACK 11
0:46

Moderately
no color

TRACK 11
0:58

Moderately
with color

LICK 4

TRACK 11
1:09

Moderately
no color

TRACK 11
1:18

Moderately
with color

LESSON #62: BENDS AND COMBOS

At first, everyone seems to struggle with bending notes. Once you start to get good at bending, you need to practice riffs that combine the other colorations (hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and vibrato). Once all these physical techniques can be played smoothly, study the primary aspects of blues theory. This will round out your playing and give you a total idea about what blues guitar soloing in music is all about.

In this lesson, we'll practice combining bends with the other colorations. Work hard at bending throughout all these exercises and you will set the stage for an exciting result. When someone can bend notes correctly, human feelings can really be expressed through their instrument. People often say the guitar sounds like it's crying or talking.

Licks

These examples are in the key of A. It's important to see the melody without the colorations first. Then it's easier to understand how the added techniques give the music its magical attraction.

LICK 1



CD 2

Moderately slow
no color



CD 2

Moderately slow
with color

LICK 2



CD 2

Moderately
no color



CD 2

Moderately
with color

SET THE MOOD WITH YOUR BLUES

I hope you're inspired to practice and get good at playing this music. Blues is an American tradition and we should be happy and proud of that fact. I used to play in a band called the Blue Guitar in Venice Beach, California, and we'd play at a club called The Comeback Inn. The group was loaded with some of the top musicians in the Los Angeles area. Mike Price (trumpet) was the leader and he would have several different lineups with top musicians coming and going, because guys would go out and tour with top groups. Sometimes during the night, to set the mood we would all say this poem together out loud in front of the audience:

*The man bent over his guitar,
The day was green the people said,
"You do not play things as they are."
The man said, "Things as they are,
Are changed upon the blue guitar."*

That band did everything it could to play and arouse some sort of mood-changing music. Some nights there was an incredible vibration between us and the place would go nuts. It didn't always happen, but we tried to go for it just the same.

LICK 3

TRACK 12
0:33

Moderately slow
no color

TRACK 12
0:42

Moderately slow
with color

LICK 4

TRACK 12
0:51

Moderately
no color

TRACK 12
0:57

Moderately
with color

LESSON #63:

JUGGLING MAJORS AND MINORS

Have you ever seen or heard someone playing all kinds of flashy riffs and then after a few minutes you're tired of hearing it? If you keep playing the same sounding major or minor riffs, no matter how technically developed, people's ears tend to wear out quickly. The most common sound in the blues is the application of the major and minor pentatonic scales (five-tone scales), but instead of playing each one of these throughout our solos, we can create more interest by *mixing* them up every so often.

I read the liner notes on a Freddie King DVD and it expressed his command and mastery of going back and forth between the two scales. In a solo you could hang around the minor notes building an idea, then use major notes to cap off the ending. It's all about using your intuition about where the right moment may be. The creative and intuitive aspects can't be taught in books, but if you listen to enough music and see plenty of concerts, their ability may rub off on you.

Major and Minor Pentatonic Scales

In this lesson, we're using the A major and the minor pentatonic scales, but you can transfer these ideas to any key since the scale shapes are all moveable. Here are all of the positions on the fretboard for the A major and A minor pentatonic scales.

It takes time to see the overlap between scales, or where these notes are in relation to one another, but I've had students come back in one week with every position memorized. The best way to visualize all this is to look for the root notes in each scale or pattern. I've circled the root notes here (which are the A notes). The first scale in each pair is the minor pentatonic scale followed by the major pentatonic.

TRACK 13
0:00
A Minor Pentatonic – Pattern 5

CD 2

A Major Pentatonic – Pattern 5

TRACK 13
0:15
A Minor Pentatonic – Pattern 1

CD 2

A Major Pentatonic – Pattern 1

TRACK 13
0:27
A Minor Pentatonic – Pattern 2

CD 2

A Major Pentatonic – Pattern 2

TRACK 13

0:39

A Minor Pentatonic – Pattern 3

A Major Pentatonic – Pattern 3

TRACK 13

0:51

A Minor Pentatonic – Pattern 4

A Major Pentatonic – Pattern 4

Licks

We can improvise or write melodies using both of these sounds together over an A dominant seventh chord (A7) in the background. You are free to go back and forth between these scales and there are good or clever times to do this once you start taking advantage of this wisdom.

Here's a couple of overlapping examples. Please try and hear the shift from one sound to the next.

LICK 1

Here, we start off using major pentatonic, then shift to minor pentatonic on the final 8th note of the first full measure.

TRACK 13

1:02

Moderately

LICK 2

This one starts out with minor pentatonic, and we shift into the major pentatonic scale on the last 8th note of the first full measure (with the C# note).

TRACK 13

1:10

Moderately

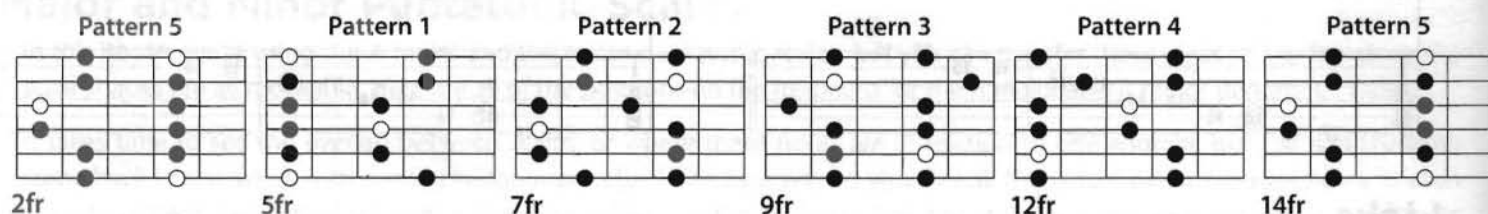
How can a veteran blues musician keep playing for years on end without growing tired of the music? The answer is the element of surprise, and using this trick can help you create some of that surprise. Try to make the music fresh and interesting every time you pick up your instrument. Even if the playing is slow, when those changes take place, there's a lift. Listen closely to well-known blues players and try to hear when the switch is happening—major to minor, minor to major.

LESSON #64: UP THROUGH POSITIONS

Time and time again a student will ask me how to play up and down the neck and really go for those higher positions. Playing through the different positions—one by one—of any key is a systematic way of seeing and learning where the notes are. But once we integrate this into our fingers and minds, use it sparingly. In other words, we don't want to be locked into climbing up and down the same systematic way every time. This concept is mainly for the purpose of learning where these places are on the fretboard. So you *can* do these types of climbing patterns every so often in a solo, but it sounds too predictable if you do it too much.

Minor Pentatonic Patterns

We're sticking to the A minor pentatonic scale to demonstrate this concept. I've displayed the five standard fingering patterns below for your study. The last one on the right is an octave higher than the first. After you go 12 frets up, all the patterns start to repeat themselves an octave higher.



Exercises

EXERCISE 1

CD 2 TRACK 14 0:00 Slowly

EXERCISE 2

This exercise uses an ascending sequence up the fretboard with just one coloration: vibrato.

CD 2 TRACK 14 0:19 Moderately slow

EXERCISE 3

This exercise uses the same ascending sequence as Exercise 2, but here we add in some hammer-ons, pull-offs, and grace notes for a little more color.

TRACK 14
0:38

Moderately slow

EXERCISE 4

This great exercise slides along one string. It's a nice-sounding way of getting into a new position.

TRACK 14
0:56

Moderately slow

Whether you want to be a slow, soulful bluesman or a flashy showoff, you still need to know where the notes are and the layout of the fretboard. Some people learn to navigate the fretboard and immediately go crazy playing anything they can think of all over the place (which usually sounds awful!). Once you know where the right notes are, try and focus on that—the *right notes*. The study of music for me is about two things: 1) learning where the notes are, and 2) being creative with those notes now that you've learned them. Let's not forget to study classic riffs, but let's add what we can to feel our own creative force. It all just makes for better music and a higher feeling of self-achievement.

LESSON #65: DOWN THROUGH POSITIONS

For some reason it always seems more difficult to learn how to go down the fretboard, rather than going *up*. In this lesson, we'll work on some exercises that will help us move down the neck sequentially.

When I heard Bill Connors playing with Chick Corea I thought I'd better start practicing descending lines. Though I know Bill's not known as a blues musician, learning some of his techniques helped my playing overall. Sometimes we can inject life into our playing by studying other styles of music. Or perhaps it was Jimmy Page's pentatonic runs flying down the neck that got me inspired. (I was lucky enough to see Led Zeppelin at the Rose Palace in Pasadena when they were on their first U.S. tour. Wow!)

Exercises

In the following exercises, we'll be working through A minor pentatonic patterns.

EXERCISE 1

This first example should get your pull-offs up to speed. I've also marked the sustained notes with vibrato. Apply vibrato as much as you can to give the notes a feeling of passion—as if you love every note.

TRACK 15
0:00
CD 2 Slowly

Exercise 1 is a descending A minor pentatonic scale exercise. It is written in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a treble clef, showing the notes of the scale with vibrato marks over the sustained notes. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with six lines, showing the fret numbers for each note. The scale starts on the 17th fret of the high E string and descends through various positions, ending on the 2nd fret of the low E string. The tablature includes fret numbers and pull-off symbols (indicated by a vertical line with a horizontal bar) to show the technique for moving down the neck.

EXERCISE 2

TRACK 15
0:30
CD 2 Slowly

Exercise 2 is another descending A minor pentatonic scale exercise, similar to Exercise 1 but with a different fret sequence. It is also in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The top staff is a standard musical staff with a treble clef, showing the notes of the scale with vibrato marks. The bottom staff is a guitar tablature staff with six lines, showing the fret numbers for each note. The scale starts on the 15th fret of the high E string and descends through various positions, ending on the 3rd fret of the low E string. The tablature includes fret numbers and pull-off symbols to show the technique for moving down the neck.

"PLAY THE NECK"

I had a steady gig for 10 years at the same club from 1990 to 2000. There were times when I wanted to jump out of the window because of the cigarette smoke and the fear of running out of ideas. One day this huge, fat guy walked in right in the middle of a quiet break between songs. There was a large crowd at hand and everyone was waiting in anticipation for the next song. The heavy-set man must have recognized I was fumbling in my head for some inspiration and he shouted at me, "Play the neck!" Everyone burst into laughter! He had a huge smile on his face, and suddenly the light-heartedness of the moment got me going. I began to play the holy heck out of the neck. It didn't matter what I did, I just kept on going. Maybe that's what Frank Zappa meant when he said, "Shut up and play your guitar." Quit thinking about it so much and just play, play, play!

EXERCISE 3

If you work hard at this sliding exercise, the flexibility you'll achieve will take you to another level with your technique. Try using different fingers, because you'll have to experiment in order to find the optimum way to play it.

TRACK 15
0:58

CD 2

Moderately slow

17 15 15 13 15 12 13 10 12 10 10 8 10 8 8 5 8 5 5 3 5 3 3 1 5 3 2 5 2

EXERCISE 4

The beauty of this particular triplet breakdown is to avoid getting into the habit of going through the scales in notational order (notice how the sequence skips a note in the minor pentatonic pattern between the second and third note of each triplet). When people are in the habit of practicing scales from bottom to top and back again, they often get stuck in a rut. The level of difficulty here is high but rewarding, and it may help you to get ideas about composing your own melodies.

TRACK 15
1:12

CD 2

Moderately slow

15 17 12 15 10 13 8 10 9 5 8 3 5 3 5 5 2

EXERCISE 5

You can take advantage of the slide to create fast runs that roll down the neck. It's important to visualize the notes that are coming up ahead of time, and perhaps that is the most important key to developing downward movement on the fretboard.

TRACK 15
1:22

CD 2

Moderately

17 15 17 15 13 14 12 14 12 10 12 10 7 10 8 5

LESSON #66: PASSING TONES ("INBETWEENERS")

There's no such word as "inbetweeners," but it's my favorite name for passing tones. Passing tones are notes that can be added in between the notes of any scale. This creates a brief chromatic passage that we find commonly used in the blues and most other styles of music. I often use these types of notes to jazz up a regular major diatonic scale, or in this case, a major or minor pentatonic scale. Songs that use passing tones in a big way are "Moby Dick" by Led Zeppelin, "Frankenstein" by Edgar Winter, and "Sunshine of Your Love" by Cream. Of all the guitarists that really come to mind that capitalized on passing tones in their lead style was Alvin Lee from Ten Years After. Listen to their live recording *Undead* to hear plenty of passing tones.

LICK 1

These examples are in the key of A and use either the A minor or A major pentatonic scale with added passing tones. In each example, I've circled the passing tones, so you can clearly see how and where I've added them. In this first lick, we're playing out of the A minor pentatonic scale, so those C \flat notes are all passing tones. (If we were using the A major pentatonic scale, they'd be part of the scale!)

TRACK 16
0:00

CD 2
Moderately

LICK 2

Here, we're using the A major pentatonic scale, so in this case, the C \sharp notes are now passing tones (instead of the C \flat notes, which are part of the A major pentatonic scale).

TRACK 16
0:09

CD 2
Moderately

LICK 3

Lick 3 uses the A minor pentatonic scale with passing tones. In this example, the hammer-ons and pull-offs need to be accurate. You need to work on finger strength and these exercises can do the trick if you practice them enough. Don't take shortcuts or try and work your way around doing these properly. Listen to the CD and try to copy the sound.

TRACK 16
0:18

CD 2
Moderately fast

LICK 4

This next line should remind you of a classic blues lick sound. The note that is "in between" is responsible for the character in this style of playing. Here, we're using the A minor pentatonic scale again.

TRACK 18

0:30

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 5

Here's another that uses the A minor pentatonic scale.

TRACK 18

0:38

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 6

This lick uses hammer-ons to add notes in between the notes of the A minor pentatonic scale.

TRACK 18

0:45

CD 2

Moderately fast

LICK 7

Here's one that uses pull-offs to add notes in between the notes of the A minor pentatonic scale.

TRACK 18

0:53

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 8

Let's finish with a quick one in A minor pentatonic with some tasty "inbetweeners."

TRACK 18

0:58

CD 2

Moderately fast

LESSON #67: BLUESY NEIGHBOR TONES

Your neighbor lives next door to you, and in music it's the same: half-step neighbor tones are notes that are one fret above and below the notes of the key you're in. The use of half-step neighbor tones is a fairly common sound in the blues. The trick is getting familiar with the sound after you've practiced straight pentatonic scales for a while. Another challenge for students is developing the ability to bend notes a half step to the right pitch—whether you're bending to or away from a neighbor tone. This takes a lot of practice. Listen to Robben Ford for some great examples of this technique.

LICK 1

All these examples are in the key of A. For each lick, I'll point out which scale I'm using and circle all of the neighbor tones so you can see where they are. Here's one that uses the A major pentatonic scale, and it adds neighbor tones before many of the scale tones. The only time a neighbor tone is added *after* a scale tone is on beat 3 of the first full measure, where the upper neighbor G \sharp follows the F \sharp .

TRACK 17
0:00

CD 2 Moderately

LICK 2

This one uses the A minor pentatonic scale, with all of the neighbor tones appearing before scale tones.

TRACK 17
0:07

CD 2 Moderately

LICK 3

Now that you've seen some half-step neighbor notes added to the pentatonic sounds, let's practice some half-step bending. This one uses the A minor pentatonic scale, and bends *from* the neighbor tones up to scale tones.

TRACK 17
0:14

CD 2 Moderately fast

LESSON #68: PLAYING THE CHORDS

LICK 4

Here, we're again using the A minor pentatonic scale, but it mixes the bending up a bit. The first bend moves from a scale tone up to a neighbor tone, the second bend moves from a neighbor tone up to a scale tone, and the final bend starts on a neighbor tone and bends up to a scale tone before releasing back to the neighbor tone.

TRACK 17

0:20

Moderately fast

LICK 5

Here, we start out using the A minor pentatonic scale, playing a neighbor tone at the beginning of the measure. But midway through the first measure we switch to using the A major pentatonic scale, adding a lower neighbor on beat 3. Then, before we get too comfortable, we immediately switch back to using the A minor pentatonic scale at the beginning of the next measure, with another neighbor tone on beat 1.

TRACK 17

0:27

Moderately fast

LICK 6

Here are some half-step glissando (gliss.) slides. This time, we're operating out of the A major pentatonic scale. Notice the accented neighbor tone on beat 1 of the first full measure. Since this note falls in the A minor pentatonic scale, we could view this as briefly moving to A minor pentatonic, but it can also be viewed as all in A major pentatonic, as shown here.

TRACK 17

0:34

Moderately

LICK 7

This lick uses bends and a hammer-on to move to and from neighbor tones in the A major pentatonic scale.

TRACK 17

0:41

Moderately

LESSON #68: PLAYING THE CHANGES

A lot of players ask me if I “stick to the changes” in a blues progression. What they mean is: do I follow the chords around during my solos? In other words, when the chord is A7, do I play in the key of A, when the chord is D7, do I play in the key of D, and when the chord is E7, do I play in E? (These three chords can all be found in a blues progression in the key of A during one song.) My answer to this question is: yes and no. I can “play the changes” if I want to, but I don’t have to. For instance, you can stick to A minor or A major pentatonic scale-based riffs throughout the whole tune, or you can follow the chord changes. In this lesson, though, we’ll get started with one way to “play the changes.”

The I, IV, and V Chords

In a blues, you play the I, IV, and V chords. The I chord is the chord of the key you’re playing in, so in the key of A, the I chord is A (or A7). The IV and the V represent other chords within the song or key that you are playing in. In the key of A, the IV chord is D (or D7), and the V chord is E (or E7).

Playing the Changes

Following chord changes in one song takes practice and is an art to master. The most basic and systematic way to start working on this is to just move an A7 riff up five frets, and that turns it into a D7 riff. The E7 riff would be seven frets higher (or two above D7). Play through the examples to get a clear idea as to what I mean.

Licks

These licks are all grouped in threes. The first of each set shows a lick over an A7 chord, the second lick then moves that same lick up to a D7 chord, and the third one moves it up to an E7 chord.

LICK 1

Here’s our first lick, over an A7 chord.



A7

T							
A	7	5	6	5	7	7	5 5 6
B							7

LICK 2

Now we take Lick 1 and move it up to the IV chord (D7).



D7

T							
A	12	10	11	10	12	12	10 11
B							12

LICK 3

Here, we’ll move Lick 1 all the up to the V chord (E7).



E7

T							
A	14	12	13	12	14	12	12 13
B							14

LICK 4

Let's start with another lick over our I (A7) chord.



A7

T	8	7	5	7	5	6	7	5
A								
B								

LICK 5

Now here's Lick 4 moved up to the IV chord (D7).

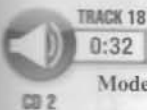


D7

T	13	12	10	12	10	11	12	10
A								
B								

LICK 6

And here's Lick 4 moved up to the V chord (E7).

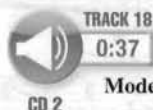


E7

T	15	14	12	14	12	13	14	12
A								
B								

LICK 7

Here's one more lick for the I (A7) chord.



A7

T	7	5	5	8	5	7	(7)	5	7
A									
B									

LICK 8

And here's Lick 7 moved up to the IV chord (D7).



D7

T	12	10	10	13	10	12	(12)	10	12
A									
B									

LICK 9

And, of course, here's Lick 7 moved up to the V chord (E7).



E7

T	14	12	12	15	12	14	(14)	12	14
A									
B									

Once you can transfer licks from chord to chord, you're playing the changes. The next step is being able to play the changes all in the same position.

To hear a master at this, listen to Michael Bloomfield—the first person I heard doing this well. Bloomfield is perhaps the most overlooked American blues guitarist, having been overshadowed by Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton during his time. Check out his *Super Session* recordings and his work with the Electric Flag.

LESSON #69: STRINGING IT TOGETHER

This series of exercises was created around two pentatonic positions that are next to each other. Running colorations up and down one string and then repeating the same figure on another string is great for technique building. I call these sounds "wider" because they take up more space on the neck. They also have a distinct sound that reminds me of Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Licks

All of the following licks are within the A minor pentatonic scale. Listen to the CD and pay attention to the rhythmic quality of the lines. Even though we are sliding, hammering, and pulling, we still need to pay attention to the rhythm!

LICK 1



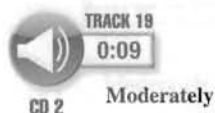
Tablature for Lick 1 (A minor pentatonic scale, 4/4 time):

Staff 1 (Treble Clef):

Staff 2 (TAB):

3 5 8 3 5 7 2 5 7 2 5 7 3 5 8 3 5 8

LICK 2



Tablature for Lick 2 (A minor pentatonic scale, 4/4 time):

Staff 1 (Treble Clef):

Staff 2 (TAB):

3 5 8 3 5 7 2 5 7 2 5 7 3 5 8 3 5 8

LICK 3



Tablature for Lick 3 (A minor pentatonic scale, 4/4 time):

Staff 1 (Treble Clef):

Staff 2 (TAB):

8 5 3 8 5 3 7 5 2 7 5 2 7 5 3 8 5 3

FEEL THE MUSIC

I was raised in the land of the blues, but I love Indian music as well. This led me to attend the Ali Akbar College of Indian Music in San Rafael, California. When Ali Akbar heard me play, he asked me if I had played Indian music before. I said, "No!" and he gave me a puzzled look. He could tell I *felt* the music. I had been playing in blues bands since I was 11 and, at that time, I was 27, so I'd already been trying to be a blues guy for 16 years. The point of the story is *feel*. It doesn't matter what kind of music it is as long as it's got emotion and feel (though good technique doesn't hurt). Later, I heard that Ali Akbar's favorite musician was B.B. King, and I decided to stick to the American blues since it's not just about style but also feel.

LICK 4

TRACK 19

0:26

Moderately

8 5 3 8 5 3 7 5 2 7 5 2 7 5 3 8 5 3

LICK 5

TRACK 19

0:34

Moderately fast

3 5 8 5 3 3 5 7 5 3 2 5 7 5 2 2 5 7 5 2 3 5 8 5 3 3 5 8 5 3

LICK 6

TRACK 19

0:46

Moderately fast

8 5 3 5 8 8 5 3 5 8 7 5 2 5 7 7 5 2 5 7 7 5 3 5 7 8 5 3 5 8

LESSON #70: BENDING IT TOGETHER

In this series of exercises, we'll be moving laterally between two minor pentatonic positions while using bends, slides, hammer-ons, and pull-offs. All of these ideas are meant to show you the potential of moving away from just practicing scales in a simple numerical order.

Licks

What's interesting about these licks is the use of a sustaining note. With the proper attack, all you have to do is hit the first note of each group and the rest of the figure can be executed by that single pick stroke. I saw Stevie Ray Vaughan just hitting one note and playing long-lasting lines with his left hand traveling up and down the fretboard. A hammer-on or a pull-off can re-strike the note to keep the sustain going.

LICK 1

TRACK 20
0:00

CD 2

Fast

Tablature for Lick 1: 10 (10) 8 5 8 (8) 5 3 7 (7) 5 2

LICK 2

TRACK 20
0:07

CD 2

Fast

Tablature for Lick 2: 8 10 (10) 8 5 5 8 (8) 5 3 5 7 (7) 5 2

LICK 3

TRACK 20
0:15

CD 2

Fast

Tablature for Lick 3: 2 5 7 (7) 5 2 3 5 8 (8) 5 3 5 8 10 (10) 8 5

TRY THIS LATERAL PATTERN SHIFTING WITH OTHER SCALES

There is so much that can be done with these types of techniques using all the scales. Honing a style in any form of music takes a tremendous amount of self-examination and creative endeavor. You need to search for every possible sound/melody that you can squeeze out of your instrument. After going over and viewing where you're at countless times, you have to edit (throw out what you don't think sounds good) and be left with nothing but the most choice notes (riffs, licks, melodies, etc.) that you've come up with or copied from the masters.

LICK 4

TRACK 20
0:23

Fast

LICK 5

TRACK 20
0:29

Moderately fast

LICK 6

TRACK 20
0:39

Fast

LICK 7

TRACK 20
0:46

Fast

All this moving around is designed to get some fluidity in the music. If a person's singing voice is stiff, it sounds like a robot. The same would be true of the guitar. When we're first learning to do this, it feels like a brand new piece of rope that's as stiff as wire. You have to flex the strings over and over to loosen up your delivery.

LESSON #71: THE 12-BAR BLUES

Originally, solo acoustic musicians played the blues. It's been said that blind musicians in the South played on street corners to earn a living and they created the foundation that influenced everyone else. When they played, they freely changed chords whenever they felt like it and told their stories as the moment unfolded without any firm chord structure or progression. This would make it hard for other musicians to follow along if they wanted to jam, so people started structuring some chord changes that get played the same way over and over—hence the beginning of the organized blues jam session. Whether this is exactly how it happened or not, it's a good story!

The 12-Bar Blues Form

The 12-bar blues is very popular and makes it easier for musicians to come up with a repertoire to get through a complete night of music, especially if they've never played together before or have never even met!

Here's a standard 12-bar blues progression in the key of A. I show specific voicings for each of these chords here, but you can play any version of A7, D7, and E7 that you like!



CD 2 Moderately

Diagram illustrating the 12-Bar Blues progression in the key of A, showing chord voicings and fret positions for A7, D7, and E7 chords across 12 bars.

Bar 1: A7 (2 3 4), 2 3 4

Bar 2: A7 (2 3), 2 3

Bar 3: D7 (1 2 1 3 4), 5fr, 1 2 1 3 1

Bar 4: D7 (1 2 1 3 1), 5fr, 1 2 1 3 1

Bar 5: A7 (2 3 4), 2 3 4

Bar 6: A7 (2 3), 2 3

Bar 7: A7 (2 3 4), 2 3 4

Bar 8: A7 (2 3), 2 3

Bar 9: D7 (1 2 1 3 4), 5fr, 1 2 1 3 4

Bar 10: D7 (1 2 1 3 1), 5fr, 1 2 1 3 1

Bar 11: A7 (2 3 4), 2 3 4

Bar 12: A7 (2 3), 2 3

Bar 13: E7 (1 2 1 3 4), 7fr, 1 2 1 3 4

Bar 14: E7 (1 2 1 3 1), 7fr, 1 2 1 3 1

Bar 15: D7 (1 2 1 3 4), 5fr, 1 2 1 3 4

Bar 16: D7 (1 2 1 3 1), 5fr, 1 2 1 3 1

Bar 17: A7 (2 3 4), 2 3 4

Bar 18: A7 (2 3), 2 3

Bar 19: E7 (2 1 4), 2 1 4

Bar 20: E7 (2 1), 2 1

There are several different rhythmic feels that you can use to play the blues, so listen to as many types as you can, whether it's a shuffle, Texas shuffle, jump swing, blues ballad, standard 2-4, boogie, boogie woogie, etc.

RHYTHM ROCKS

I love playing rhythm guitar behind a great singer or saxophonist. You can't play lead all night if you're in a band playing songs. You have to support the song with a strong rhythmic background and then take your solo when the time comes. Listen to the whole song when you study and don't forget the rhythm guitar role. Hold the song together with some tastefully played chords and then lash out when it's your turn to solo!

Other Forms

The 12-bar blues is by far the most common type of blues you'll come across, and most any time you sit down at a jam, that's what they'll be playing. But there are plenty of other variations, and even ones of differing length—like the 8-bar blues. I've even played blues forms that are only seven measures long!

LESSON #72: MORE TURNAROUNDS

The turnaround usually happens at the end of a song, tune, or blues progression, to inform everybody that we're going back to the beginning or that the outro or ending is coming up. Turnarounds sometimes also get used at the beginning as an intro. There's endless ways to create a turnaround and musicians keep coming up with new ones all the time, so let's check out some more turnarounds in this lesson.

LICK 1

This first one is by far the most recognizable turnaround I've heard.



Moderately slow

W/ pick & fingers

LICK 5

TRACK 22
0:58

Moderately slow

w/ pick & fingers

TAB

6	5	4	2	2	1	4	5
7	7	6	6	5	5	4	5

LICK 6

TRACK 22
1:12

Moderately slow

w/ pick & fingers

TAB

12	12	11	11	10	10	9	8
12	11	10	10	9	8	7	8

THE TURNAROUND IS THE HOOK

You could set up a blues tune and play a different turnaround at the end of every verse, but not many people do that. Some advanced players may do that when they're jamming for long periods of time, but usually the blues turnaround is the only hook or repeated melody you'll hear throughout a song. The vocal melody can be structured, but a guitarist usually improvises riffs around the vocalist and a good vocalist will sometimes improvise away from the song's melody as well. The turnaround is something for the listener to look forward to in the way of a story or harmony that's leading to the end of a chapter or section. It's like the music is saying, "Hey! Get ready! We are coming back at you and you haven't heard the last of us, nor the best of us yet!" There are themes in music that most of the different cultures around the world relate to. The turnaround happens to be the main theme of the blues that you can rely on. It's going to be there in the best of musical situations and it's going to be the thing the average music-loving person relates to. When people hear it, they think, "Hey! That's the blues!"

LICK 7

TRACK 22
1:27

Moderately slow

TAB

12	10	12	11	10	10	9	8
12	11	10	10	9	8	7	9

LICK 8

Check out how Lick 8 is similar to Lick 7, but played backwards!

TRACK 22
1:42

Moderately slow

TAB

12	10	11	10	10	10	9	8
12	11	10	10	9	8	7	9

LESSON #73: THREE-OCTAVE BLUES RIFFS

There's important logic involved with knowing the octaves on the fretboard. Every time you learn a riff, you should see if you can play it in some other octave somewhere else on the neck. Playing as high or as low as you want to is tantamount in recreating your thoughts and emotions. For instance, if I want to scream on the guitar, would it sound better high or low? If I want to growl on the guitar, would it sound better high or low? If I want the guitar to sound like a cat or a chicken, where's the best place on the neck to do that? Having the flexibility to do that is what the freedom of expression in music is all about. It takes study and familiarization.

Licks

These are some commonly heard blues licks played in different octaves. If you dive deeply into these examples, the light bulb in your head should go off about playing in different octaves. It's a purely logical concept.

LICK 1

TRACK 23

0:00

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 2

TRACK 23

0:12

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 3

TRACK 23

0:22

CD 2

Moderately slow

LICK 4

TRACK 23

0:34

CD 2

Moderately slow

LICK 5

TRACK 23
0:46

Moderately

LICK 6

TRACK 23
0:57

Moderately

LICK 7

TRACK 23
1:13

Moderately slow

To me, these are very traditional-sounding blues licks. In my book *Guitar Workout* (Hal Leonard), I cover the three-octave principle quite extensively, but I don't integrate it with blues riffs like I'm doing here. The three-octave system is about knowing your way around on the fretboard. With that knowledge, any style of music can be played with more versatility and understanding.

PROFESSOR OF THE BLUES

A college professor was once visiting a music store where I was working and heard me doing some three-octave exercises that I had made up. He asked me what I was doing and I explained it to him. He said he had been a classical guitarist for many years, but had never had anyone point out this logical system for guitar.

LESSON #74: 3RDS FOR RHYTHM

You might play the guitar and listen to a lot of blues and never be quite sure what that guy is playing in the background behind the harmonica. Well, one great rhythm tool is to play 3rds behind a harmonica or other instruments. They're especially good in tunes that have a shuffle feel. In this lesson, we'll take a look at quite a few ways to use 3rds as a backup tool. 3rds are intervals from scales that are three notes apart. For instance, take a note from any point in a scale, skip the next note, then add the next note in line (the *third* note) to it—you've got a 3rd!

3rd Riffs

RIFF 1

The notes in this riff were taken from the A Mixolydian mode (A-B-C#-D-E-F#-G). This is a great sound for the blues and is presented here in a complete 12-bar blues progression. Notice the 12/8 time signature? This is a classic shuffle feel in triplets.

TRACK 24
0:00

CD 2 Slowly

A7

5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7

5

D7

10 10 12 12 13 13 12 12 | 10 10 12 12 13 13 12 12 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7

A7

9

E7

12 12 14 14 15 15 14 14 | 10 10 12 12 13 13 12 12 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 5 5 6 7 6 7 5 6 7

D7 A7

The turnaround ----
w/ pick & fingers ----

Riffs 2-9 are all variations that you can substitute in to the full 12-bar blues. Riffs 2-7 show just variations for the A chord, but you can move these up five frets for the D chords and seven frets for the E chords.

RIFF 2

TRACK 24
0:49

CD 2 Moderately slow

5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 5 5 7 7 8 8 7 7

RIFF 3

TRACK 24
0:57

CD 2 Moderately slow

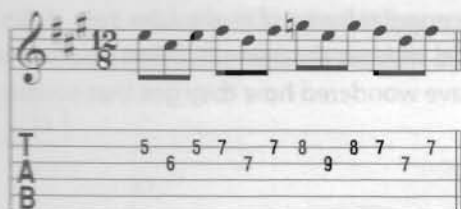
6 6 7 7 8 8 7 7 | 6 6 7 7 8 8 7 7

RIFF 4

TRACK 24

1:04

Moderately slow



RIFF 5

TRACK 24

1:12

Moderately slow



THE JOY OF HARMONICA BACKUP

Whenever I was gigging with a blues group, there was usually one or two harmonica players at the bar dying to sit in with our band. They would constantly bug us until we finally gave in and allowed what usually was an amateur to get up on the stage and play with us. At the end of the jam they would look to us for approval and we kiddingly would say, "Hey! You're pretty good!" But really, in the back of our minds we were swearing at ourselves for having let that guy up on the stage to play with us! Occasionally, a professional might sit in and that was a real treat. I've had the pleasure of playing with Al Blake from the Hollywood Fats Band and he was a bank of knowledge sharing all his tips and ideas. He gave me several recordings of blues musicians and this lesson is primarily based on what I gained from listening to that music.

RIFF 6

TRACK 24

1:20

Moderately slow



RIFF 7

TRACK 24

1:26

Moderately slow



RIFF 8

Riffs 8 and 9 are alternative notes for the D and E chords. Use the variation ideas to make different combinations.

TRACK 24

1:34

Moderately slow

D9



RIFF 9

TRACK 24

1:42

Moderately slow

E9



THE POWER OF RHYTHM

No doubt everyone wants to be able to shred and get the roaring applause for a great lead break. Here's a joke: *There's two lines outside a rehearsal room for an audition. One person is in one line and 100 people are in the other line. What's the line for with just the one person? It's the rhythm guitar audition line.*

The funny thing is that the rhythm guitarist is going to get the gig. You have to pay attention to the importance of strong rhythm parts. You don't play lead guitar from the beginning of the song until the end. I've said this time and time again. Work hard at being a good all-round player and you'll land all kinds of gigs that other musicians can't handle.

LESSON #75: 6THS FOR RHYTHM

The 6th is an interval that can be used for rhythm parts in the blues as well as other popular forms of music. Like 3rds, it can be a rhythmic part that has melodic movement compared to simply strumming a chord without changing it. When you first hear it, it might remind you of something you've heard before in a song and you may have wondered how they got that sound.

Riffs

The first song that comes to mind for me is "Killing Floor." This first example of rhythmic 6ths is very similar to the "Killing Floor" guitar part. All these various techniques require a lot of practice. To freely be able to strum 6ths, you have to mute the other strings you're not using with your fretting hand. Listen to the CD and try to recreate the sound.



TRACK 25
0:00

CD 2

Moderately

A7

TAB

D7 A7

E7 D7 A7 E7

This next example is another 12-bar blues setting and might remind you of country music. Both styles have a lot in common, and people borrow ideas from each other, searching for a unique sound.



TRACK 25
0:33

Slowly

12-bar blues setting in A major, 4/4 time, played slowly. The notation includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a guitar tablature staff below it. The piece is divided into three systems of four measures each.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): Chord A7. Treble staff shows a dotted quarter note on A4, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C#5), and a dotted quarter note on A4. Tablature shows a dotted quarter on 5, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (7, 9, 7), and a dotted quarter on 5. Fingering: w/ pick & fingers.

System 2 (Measures 5-8): Chord D7 (measures 5-6), then A7 (measures 7-8). Treble staff shows a dotted quarter note on D4, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (D4, E4, F#5), and a dotted quarter note on D4. Tablature shows a dotted quarter on 3, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (5, 7, 5), and a dotted quarter on 3. Fingering: 3, 4, 3, 4.

System 3 (Measures 9-12): Chord E7 (measures 9-10), then A7 (measure 11), and E7 (measure 12). Treble staff shows a dotted quarter note on E4, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (E4, F#5, G#6), and a dotted quarter note on E4. Tablature shows a dotted quarter on 5, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (5, 7, 5), and a dotted quarter on 5. Fingering: 5, 6, 5, 6.

Turnaround and Walk-up: The turnaround section (measures 11-12) shows a dotted quarter note on E4, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (E4, F#5, G#6), and a dotted quarter note on E4. The walk-up section (measures 13-14) shows a dotted quarter note on E4, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (E4, F#5, G#6), and a dotted quarter note on E4. Fingering: 5, 6, 5, 6.

6THS HELP YOU STAY OUT OF OTHER INSTRUMENTS' SPACE

You could search through a vast assortment of popular recording collections and find the 6th intervals being used particularly in soul or Motown music. When you're playing rhythm parts, you don't always want huge, fat-sounding chords. Sometimes, and way more often than not, little two- and three-note chords tightly or sharply played are more effective. Plus, if you're playing in a large group, you need to leave space for the other instruments. Let the keyboard or the bass fill the sound out and you can stick to the higher registers. The spectrum or science of register is a most important study and your ears and intuition play a major role in selecting where your part should be placed. If the other guitarist is playing a low-sounding chord, it might be better for you to play a high-sounding chord. It's as simple as that. If you only know one voicing or one chord shape of each chord, you won't be able to do that. A common question from beginning students is, "Is there really more than one way to play the same chord?" There's usually several ways to play the same chord either higher up the neck or lower down the neck.

When I'm in a jam session, I always pay attention to the other musicians and listen to where they're voicing their instruments. We can stay out of each other's way and play with a looser approach because of that. Two very good guitarists trying to play the same part all night doesn't sound as good as two average players that are staying out of the way of each other by playing in different registers.

Sliding around on 6ths and 3rds is an attractive sound and should be added to your music. You can become a more sophisticated musician since you won't be limited to just being able to strum a single chord. You can now make up musical rhythm parts that fit different songs and situations!

LESSON #76: CHUCK BERRY-STYLE RHYTHM

When I turned sweet 16, I got my driver's license and drove up the coast from Los Angeles to Palo Alto to visit a friend. We picked him up at his house, then headed for San Francisco hoping to hear some music at the Fillmore West. When we finally got there after hours of driving we pulled around a corner and in big letters on the marquis it said "CHUCK BERRY." I had heard his hit song "Johnny B. Goode" on the radio and lots of cover bands were starting to play his music, but I really didn't know that much about him. When he strolled out onto the stage and started playing his classic rhythms and fantastic songs, the crowd went crazy. He had us dancing and laughing and we were entertained for what seemed to be hours on end. I've never grown tired of hearing his music, and so this lesson is about his rhythm sound.

Riffs

RIFF 1

This first example shows the complete 12-bar blues form and uses open strings so you don't have to stretch much. This is the most basic form of this style in the key of A. We'll explore some variations in the following riffs.



12-bar blues form in the key of A (A5, A6, A5, A6, A5, A6, A5, A6, A5, A6, A5, A6).

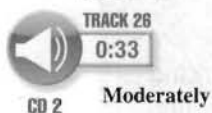
5 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 A6 A5 A6 A5 A6 A5 A6

9 E5 E6 E5 E6 D5 D6 D5 D6 A5 A6 A5 A6 E7

Tablature notation for Riff 1, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 4) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) for the 12-bar progression.

There are many variations within this style and I've supplied you with some here in Riffs 2-6. Fit these into the previous 12-bar progression by changing them into D and E chords, when necessary.

RIFF 2



Tablature notation for Riff 2, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 3, 4) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4).

RIFF 3

Moderately

Tablature notation for Riff 3, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 5) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4).

RIFF 4

Moderately

Tablature notation for Riff 4, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 5) and string numbers (1, 2, 3, 4).

Riffs 5 and 6 are two extended patterns that use two bars to complete the phrase. Listen to the sound examples on the CD to capture the right feel and execution.

RIFF 5

TRACK 26
0:58

Moderately

LESSON #77: BO DIDDLEY-STYLE RHYTHM

In jazz, they have different styles like swing, funk, Latin jazz, jazz ballad, etc. I like to call the different styles of blues after the people who were known for it. This lesson is about the Bo Diddley style. Famous rock groups like the Rolling Stones who recorded "Mona," and Eric Clapton who recorded "Hand Jive," used Bo Diddley's songs and rhythms to produce radio hits. Aaron Carter wrote "I Want Candy" and had a modern-day hit on bubblegum radio using this timeless popular Bo Diddley rhythm.

This style is very danceable. Blues musicians who want to work at parties and large functions have to provide music that people can dance to and the Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley styles do just that. You can have long extended jam sessions with each player getting a chance to stretch out and take a solo. As long as everyone is up dancing and having fun, it's a great time killer.

Riffs

RIFF 1

I keep my left arm strumming back and forth keeping time and hitting the chords where they are marked. Muting the strings with the palm of the pick hand is desirable, and you should also release the pressure of your fret hand on the strings after each chord stab. In fact, note that I'm strumming the muted strings on many of the offbeats to help propel the riff forward. Those strums aren't notated so that you can focus on the strums to accent (the ones you *don't* want to mute.) This first example is in the key of E.



Moderately fast

5

9

RIFF 2

This next example in the key of A uses an added chord that's a whole step (two frets) lower for a unique sound (moving from the A chord down to the G chord). Notice the small triads (three-note chords) instead of the large, complete barre chords (though I do barre the high G and A chords with my third finger). More often than not, you may want a thinner, sharper sound to make room for the bass and keyboard parts. When everyone bashes away at low notes, it can jumble up the sound and make it murky. Often we say the music is too busy or bass-heavy when that happens. Well, this rhythm will help rid you of that muddiness! Try and mute out the rest of the other strings with the thumb and fingers of the fretting hand. Again, I'm strumming through muted chords that aren't notated below, so you can focus on the accented rhythms.

TRACK 27

0:21

Moderately fast

Diagram illustrating the Riff 2 guitar lesson, showing musical notation and fretboard diagrams for the key of A.

The diagram is divided into five systems, each representing a measure of the riff. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The rhythm is indicated by a series of eighth notes and rests.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): The first measure is labeled 'A' and the second 'G A'. The third measure is labeled 'G A' and the fourth 'G A'. The fretboard diagrams show the following frets: 7, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7.

System 2 (Measures 5-8): The first measure is labeled 'G A' and the second 'G A'. The third measure is labeled 'G A' and the fourth 'G A'. The fretboard diagrams show the following frets: 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7.

System 3 (Measures 9-12): The first measure is labeled 'D' and the second 'G D'. The third measure is labeled 'G D' and the fourth 'G D'. The fretboard diagrams show the following frets: 10, 11, 12, 10, 11, 12, 12, 10, 11, 12, 10, 11, 12, 12, 10, 11, 12.

System 4 (Measures 13-16): The first measure is labeled 'A' and the second 'G A'. The third measure is labeled 'G A' and the fourth 'G A'. The fretboard diagrams show the following frets: 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7.

System 5 (Measures 17-20): The first measure is labeled 'E' and the second 'A E'. The third measure is labeled 'A E' and the fourth 'A E'. The fretboard diagrams show the following frets: 12, 13, 14, 12, 13, 14, 14, 14, 12, 13, 14, 14, 14, 12, 13, 14, 14.

System 6 (Measures 21-24): The first measure is labeled 'A' and the second 'G A'. The third measure is labeled 'G A' and the fourth 'G A'. The fretboard diagrams show the following frets: 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7, 3, 4, 5, 5, 7.

LESSON #78:

JOHN LEE HOOKER-STYLE RHYTHM

I think John Lee Hooker is very much responsible for the boogie rhythms featured in this lesson. As far as popular music goes, there were huge hit recordings by several rock groups that used similar rhythms: ZZ Top's "La Grange," Canned Heat's "On the Road Again," and Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky." So many groups cashed in on the boogie rhythm!


A Triplet Foundation

Beginning students that haven't rehearsed in a band nor have much music experience usually have trouble feeling how to play the shuffle. People are surprised to find it's based on a triplet (a three-count) for each beat. Because of that, a shuffle rhythm is also often called a triplet feel. The funny thing about a shuffle rhythm is that you often just play the first and third notes of the triplet, so that each pair of notes has a long-short feel to it. It's way better to *feel* how to play this than have someone explain it to you, so listen closely to the CD.


While the rhythms in a shuffle or triplet feel are all based around triplets, many shuffle rhythms only play the first and last note of the triplet (leaving the middle one out). This gets messy to write out and read, since you have to write the triplet bracket over a quarter note and an 8th note for each pair of notes. So, instead of this, musicians often write out the words "shuffle feel" or "triplet feel" at the top of a piece, along with this symbol in parentheses: (♩ = ♪♪). This means that every time you see a pair of 8th notes, it's *played* as a triplet with the first note lasting twice as long as the second one; you play two 8th notes with a triplet feel.

RIFF 1

Here's our first shuffle. Remember to look for the shuffle-feel marking at the top of the example. This means that even though the riff is written with plain 8th notes, you need to swing them when you play them. Listen to the CD to hear how it sounds!

 **TRACK 28**
0:00

CD 2 Moderately (♩ = ♪♪)
A5




RIFF 2

 **TRACK 28**
0:12


CD 2 Moderately (♩ = ♪♪)
A5



RIFF 3

 **TRACK 25**
0:24

CD 2 Moderately (♩ = ♪♪)
A5



RIFF 4

This next example in C is moveable. You could play it at the 5th fret and you'd be playing a D chord.

TRACK 28

0:35

Moderately fast (♩ = ♪)
 C5

RIFF 5

This is a power-strum, as I like to call it. Make those accents (>) really stick out. Slash at the guitar! Play the unaccented strums more quietly, or even leave them out completely.

TRACK 28

0:45

Moderately fast (♩ = ♪)
 A C D/A A C D/A

RIFF 6

This next boogie rhythm is in D minor. There are lots of possibilities with basslines when chords fall on the neck in a certain way, like this. Your fingers can find new areas to explore.

TRACK 28

1:02

Moderately fast (♩ = ♪)
 Dm

RIFF 7

This is perhaps the most basic, but it's still an important way of playing the boogie. You have to strike at the guitar to get the John Lee Hooker out of it!

TRACK 28

1:20

Moderately fast (♩ = ♪)
 E G5 A E G5 A

LESSON #79: B.B. KING-STYLE RHYTHM

Every guitarist should learn something about B.B. King's music because it's the basis of most electric guitar music. I call the blues rhythm that's characteristic of B.B. King "straight," because it's a very *bluesy* sounding rhythm. In other words, it separates itself from other styles of music, and immediately lets you know you're listening to the blues. B.B. King popularized the swing and shuffle grooves, and he later used funky rhythms as well to modernize his sound. His biggest hit, "The Thrill Is Gone," was just a straight beat over minor chords, but the producer added an orchestral string section to fill things out (which was unheard of in the blues before then).

B.B. Backup #1

If B.B. King were ever to hire me to be his rhythm guitarist, I'd focus on the following types of chords. An A6 chord moved down a whole step (two frets) is a very common sound in the blues and jazz world. It now becomes an A9, but still has the same shape! Practice this progression along with the CD and you'll be on your way to being a solid blues rhythm guitarist.



CD 2

Moderately

Diagram illustrating the B.B. Backup #1 guitar progression, showing chord shapes and fret positions for A6, A9, D6, D9, E6, and E9 chords across three systems of notation (Staff, TAB, and Fretboard).

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Measures 1-2: A6 (5fr) and A9 (5fr)
- Measures 3-4: A6 (5fr) and A9 (5fr)

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Measures 5-6: D6 (10fr) and D9 (8fr)
- Measures 7-8: A6 (5fr) and A9 (5fr)

System 3 (Measures 9-12):

- Measures 9-10: E6 (12fr) and E9 (10fr)
- Measures 11-12: A6 (5fr) and A9 (5fr)

The diagram includes chord shapes, fret positions (e.g., 5fr, 10fr, 12fr), and fretboard diagrams for each chord.

The smash hit "On Broadway" performed by George Benson used this sort of concept. Stevie Ray Vaughan's popular tune "Empty Arms" also brings to mind the strong sound of this blues rhythm style, and the jump swing sound of a lot of west coast blues bands pounds this chord sound on many tunes.

B.B. Backup #2

This next assortment of dominant seventh, ninth, and thirteenth chords could be thought of as jazz chords, but they are really a set of commonly used modern blues chords. Knowing lots of chords can only make you a better guitarist, and to think that the blues only uses a small selection of chords is a mistake that narrows your possibilities. Listen to the CD and really learn how to make these changes and not lag behind.

TRACK 25
0:32

Moderately

The musical score for "B.B. Backup #2" is presented in three systems, each containing a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. Below each staff is a corresponding guitar tablature line. The first system starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 4. The second system starts at measure 5 and ends at measure 8. The third system starts at measure 9 and ends at measure 12. Each system features a sequence of chords: A9 (4fr), A13 (5fr), A13 (5fr), A9 (7fr), D9 (9fr), D13 (10fr), A9 (4fr), and A13 (5fr). The tablature provides specific fret numbers and fingerings for each chord, with some measures showing multiple fret positions for the same chord.

JAZZ-BLUES LISTENING LIST: JOE PASS

Though Joe Pass is known for being a jazz guitarist, his chord work in blues and jazz ballads is a great example of a modernized style for the simple 12-bar blues. We can all benefit by listening to his blues recordings.

LESSON #80: SLIDING CHORDS

Sliding a chord around creates an attractive sound and it's become a tradition for blues rhythm guitarists. In this lesson, we'll turn a 6th chord into a 9th chord by moving down two frets, but we'll also slide the chords both up and down into their positions. To master the sound of this chord concept in a slow blues, you've got to cultivate the feel, so you need to practice it until you can play it in your sleep!

Rhythm Pattern 1

Throughout these lessons, I often don't provide you with many endings, because I want you to repeat it over and over until you get it right! However, here I put an ending in for the sake of the standard blues resolution/ending with a turnaround. Going from the B \flat 7 to the A7 a half step (one fret) down is a common resolution. Notice how the sliding chord is part of the ninth chord. Use the second, third, and fourth fingers of your fretting hand to play the sliding chord. That way you're in position to just add the first finger to complete the chord.



Sheet music for Rhythm Pattern 1, featuring guitar notation and tablature. The pattern consists of 11 measures, with chord changes indicated above the staff.

Measures 1-3: A9, D9, A9

Measures 4-6: D9, A9

Measures 7-9: E9, D9

Measures 10-11: A9, F7, E7, B \flat 7, A7

The tablature shows fingerings for each chord, including sliding techniques indicated by arrows and numbers.

Rhythm Pattern 2

Stevie Ray Vaughan's recording of "You're Gonna Miss Me Little Baby" inspired this next example. It's a perfect representation of all this sliding chord stuff and I love the hard-hitting way Stevie Ray Vaughan throws his guitar around when he plays this style of rhythm. However, it's also a lovely way to color the music in the background behind a singer or soloist. Currently there are several great blues guitarists that use this beautifully: Kid Ramos, Junior Watson, Tommy Castro, and Duke Robillard, to name a few. Listen to some of these people and recognize when they use this chord sliding technique.

I call the turnaround at the end a "spike riff."

TRACK 30
1:58

2 Moderately (♩ = 75)

C9

F9 C9

G9 F9 C9

1 1 3 5 3

RHYTHM RULES

I really ride people and bug them about becoming good rhythm players. I can't tell you how many times I've let people up on the stage to jam with us. They play every riff under the sun while we've backed them up with a solid blues rhythm section, but when it comes my turn to play, they spoil the whole groove and mood of the music by some amateurish rhythm guitar playing! I could care less about whether or not I get to play a solo, but if you do get up to play, you better be sure you're not going to spoil the music with some sorrowful, weak rhythm playing!

LESSON #81: BASSLINE THEMES

Another important area for our blues study is standard bassline themes. When the guitar and bass play these together, they become a hook or a repetitive melody that vocal lines and solos can be sung or played over. If you're in a band with two guitarists, it's another way to support the background music besides just playing chords while someone else is soloing. For these basslines, you lock in with the bass player and play the same theme only an octave higher on guitar, but sometimes even in unison when the bass is in a higher register. There are many famous lines that come to mind: "Crossroads" by Cream, "Rock My Plimsoul" by Jeff Beck, "How Many More Times" by Led Zeppelin (and many more!). These bassline themes play a big part in the blues, and everyone needs to work on them to improve their knowledge and blues vocabulary.

Same Pattern for Every Chord

One of the interesting and convenient things about the nature of standard tuning and the fretboard is that fingerings and melodies can be transferred to different positions without having to learn another way to play the theme again; you just move the same fingering to another place on the guitar. The first section shows basslines over just an A chord. All of the following riffs in this first section are based on the A chord. To change it into a D riff or chord, you can move it up five frets or straight over to the next set of strings. For the E chord, you just have to move two frets higher than D. I've provided a 12-bar blues with an example of this principle at the end of the lesson.

Bassline Riffs

Here are eight bassline riffs that use a standard 8th-note feel. Remember that though these are shown only for the A chord, you can use these in a complete 12-bar blues by transferring them to both the D and E chords. (To change it into a D riff or chord, you can move it up five frets or straight over to the next set of strings. For the E chord, you just have to move two frets higher than D.) Learn how to play a theme correctly with confidence, then practice moving them to other positions to complete the structuring of the 12-bar progression or song.

RIFFS 1-4

TRACK 31

0:00

CD 2 Moderately

Four measures of musical notation for bassline riffs 1-4. Each measure contains a treble clef staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. Below each staff is a tablature line with fret numbers. The riffs are: 1. 5 5 7 7 5 5 7 7, 2. 5 5 7 7 5 7 5 7, 3. 5 5 4 4 5 5 6 7, 4. 5 5 4 4 5 5 5 6 7.

RIFFS 5-8

TRACK 31

0:23

CD 2 Moderately

Four measures of musical notation for bassline riffs 5-8. Each measure contains a treble clef staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. Below each staff is a tablature line with fret numbers. The riffs are: 5. 5 4 7 4 7 4 7 4, 6. 5 4 7 4 5 4 7 4, 7. 5 4 4 7 5 4 4 7, 8. 5 4 5 4 5 6 7 5.

Shuffle Bassline Riffs

Not forgetting that you also have shuffles in the blues, I've given you a few to work on here. Try to come up with your own, too, or copy others by listening to some classic recordings.

RIFFS 9-12

TRACK 31
0:47

Moderately (♩ = ♪)

Apply the Riffs to a Full 12-Bar Blues

Going back to the 12-bar blues is the most common way to apply this concept. Here, we'll use Riff 1 to build the entire 12-bar progression. Pay attention to the chord changes of D7 and E7.

TRACK 31
1:11

Moderately

Once you have this down, go back and substitute all of the riffs you've learned in this lesson on the complete 12-bar blues.

LESSON #82: DELTA ROOTS

When you want to learn the blues and you start to investigate what steps you have to take, you may strike up a conversation with a musician who says to you, "Go to your roots." Hopefully what he or she is meaning to say is *listen to the early blues players that play solo acoustic guitar*. Some played slide or bottleneck and others just played fingerstyle, but they mostly accompanied themselves with their own basslines and chords. This lesson focuses on producing that solo acoustic guitar Delta sound.

Start with the Thumb, Then Add the Fingers

Put the pick away and play the low E with your thumb. Play it nice and steady, and count along if you need to. Also, try muting the bass note a little with the palm of your picking hand. You'll get a thud or a kick-drum effect that way.

TRACK 32
0:00

CD 2 Moderately slow
count: 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Once you can keep that low E slow and steady, you can add the melody notes by playing them with your fingers while you keep the low E bass note going. It's a bit like rubbing your tummy with your right hand while you circle your head with your left. Notice that there are notes on the beat synchronized with your thumb and notes off the beat (called syncopated notes). We start by adding some E minor pentatonic notes.

TRACK 32
0:08

CD 2 Moderately slow

Double Stops

If you want, you can add double stops to your lines. Here, we're adding double stops on the beat.

TRACK 32
0:20

CD 2 Moderately slow

And here we start working on double stops off the beat. You can use two fingers or strum both strings with one finger, using an upstroke like Lightnin' Hopkins.

TRACK 32
0:27

CD 2 Moderately slow

Developing Your Patterns

Here's a legitimate blues line using the entire concept. Build your study half a bar at a time. Slowly work this up to speed and repeat it over and over. Other lines won't be much more difficult than this one.

TRACK 32
0:34

2

Moderately

w/ fingers
*P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB
0 1 0 3 0 3 0 2 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0

*Palm mute string 6 only.

Here's another variation. All we have to do is add the pounding bass note to complete the accompaniment. It's as primal as music can get, but it's perfect in itself and just needs you to play it with the steady beat over and over till you master it.

TRACK 32
0:47

2

Moderately

w/ fingers
*P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB
3 0 2 2 0 0 0 2 0 1 2 0 0 0 0 0

*Palm mute string 6 only.

Transferring to the A Chord

The next step is a big one. Everything we learn for the E chord in the first position can be transferred to the 5th fret for the A (the IV chord) in a blues progression. It would be easy if we used a capo, but that's not possible to clamp on during a song. However, we can barre it with our index finger or hold the root note (A) with the thumb of our left hand while we play the other notes. Explore both of these techniques. These two examples are the same riffs that we just played in E, but are now moved up to A.

TRACK 32
0:59

2

Moderately

w/ fingers
*P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB
5 6 5 8 5 8 5 7 5 6 5 5 5 5 5 5

*Palm mute string 6 only.

TRACK 32
1:13

2

Moderately

w/ fingers
*P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

TAB
8 5 7 7 5 5 5 7 5 6 7 5 5 5 5 5

*Palm mute string 6 only.

LESSON #83: DELTA II

When I was first learning how to play guitar, all I did was work on my electric guitar soloing for the bands I was playing in. If I walked into a guitar shop or a party by myself, I couldn't play anything other than the lead stuff I'd been working on, and that gets old really fast for the listener! In these examples, I'm demonstrating that you can play lead lines and basslines at the same time. By writing out a bassline first, you can add the soloing lines on top. You can't play all your fancy stuff, but you can write music that has a complete sound without the need of another musician backing you up. This is what the original blues players did and it's an art we don't want to lose or ignore.

Riffs

If you like the sound of the pick, you can play the basslines below with a pick and the lead lines with your fingers (called hybrid picking). However, if you prefer the sound of the bass notes played by the thumb (like me), rather than a pick, use your thumb and fingers to play all these riffs. This frees up your index finger, too, since it doesn't have to help hold the pick.

RIFF 1



CD 2 Moderately

E7

w/ fingers

TAB

7 3 4 5 4 6 3 2 0 3 5 3 5 3 5 5 3 4 2 4 4 3 4

0 4 2 4 5 4 2 4

RIFF 2



CD 2 Moderately

E7

w/ fingers

TAB

0 2 0 3 3 0 2 0 3 3 0 2 0 3 3 0 2 0 3 3

0 4 2 4 5 4 2 4

RIFF 3

TRACK 33

0:44

Moderately

E7

w/ fingers

TAB

5	7	4	7	5	4	2	5	2	4	5	2	3	2	4	2	5	4	2	4	2	0	1	2	0	3	4	2	0	1	2	3
7								2	4	5	2	3	2	4	2	5	4	2	4	2	0	1	2	0	3	4	2	0	1	2	3

RIFF 4

TRACK 33

1:06

Moderately

E7

w/ fingers

TAB

4	2	3	3	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	5	4	7	5	5	3	5	3	0	0	3	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2
0													7	4	4				2											

If this study seems too difficult at the stage you're at, keep moving ahead but try and come back to this when you can. Little by little you can achieve anything. As legendary guitar educator Ted Greene would always say: "Determination!"

STEADY WORK CAN BUILD YOUR BLUES HOUSE

There was this old man who lived in Corral Canyon in the hills behind Malibu, California. They used to call him Stonewall Swanson. He would drive down to the beach and load his truck up with round rocks (which is illegal now), and haul them back up into the hills to build his house and garden walls. After years of hauling and piling, his place looked like a civil war fort. This was the most solid structure in the area and whenever there was a fire or an earthquake, his place was always still standing and looked virtually untouched. All the quick-rise modern houses and apartments had either fallen or burned to the ground. The point is that in order for the blues to be solid and able to withstand the test of time, you need to work at it steadily like Stonewall Swanson. Good blues has withstood commercial music's plastic recording test.

LESSON #84: CALL AND RESPONSE

Call and response is about following up a riff with another riff that's complementary to the previous one. This *can* be an easy thing to do, but there are degrees to the effectiveness of your answer. (Of course, the first riff should be a good one!) I think perhaps the best example of this on electric guitar is Eric Clapton with Cream on the *Wheels of Fire* album. The extended jam on the "Spoonful" track seemingly goes on forever with one call-and-response theme after another. The reason Eric can keep this up and not run out of ideas is the way he follows up a riff with a complementary riff (or a "response") to the first phrase with another phrase. You use the first line to bounce off into another line.

Licks

I'll use some simple pentatonic lines in an attempt at showing you how it's done. Here I'm showing some simple variations, but imagine a composer complementing a line that uses dozens of notes. It can be an exciting challenge!

In each of the following licks, you can see where each call and response falls by looking between the tab and notation. We'll start out with some short phrases. In these first three licks, there will be two sets each of a call and response.

LICK 1



Moderately

Call and response lick 1. The notation shows four measures. The first two measures are labeled 'call' and the next two are labeled 'response'. The tablature below the notation shows the fret numbers for each note.

call ----- response ----- call ----- response -----

TAB: 5 8 5 8 | 10 12 8 10 | 5 5 7 7 | 2 5 3 5

LICK 2



Moderately

Call and response lick 2. The notation shows four measures. The first two measures are labeled 'call' and the next two are labeled 'response'. The tablature below the notation shows the fret numbers for each note.

call ----- response ----- call ----- response -----

TAB: 9 12 13 10 | 10 13 12 10 | 15 12 13 15 | 17 15 17 15 | 17 14

LICK 3



Moderately

Call and response lick 3. The notation shows four measures. The first two measures are labeled 'call' and the next two are labeled 'response'. The tablature below the notation shows the fret numbers for each note.

call ----- response ----- call ----- response -----

TAB: 5 7 5 5 | 10 8 10 10 | 14 12 14 12 | 15 15 13 14

Now let's try some longer phrases. In each of the following three licks, there's just one call and response.

LICK 4

TRACK 34
0:36

Moderately

call - - - - - response - - - - -

TAB 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 8 10 8 9 7 10 7 7 9

LICK 5

TRACK 34
0:49

Moderately

call - - - - - response - - - - -

TAB 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 10 8 10 8 9 8 10 8 10 8 10

LICK 6

TRACK 34
0:58

Moderately

call - - - - - response - - - - -

TAB 5 8 5 7 8 5 2 5 5 2 5 2 5 13 15 15 12 12 14 15 13 12 14 15 13 14

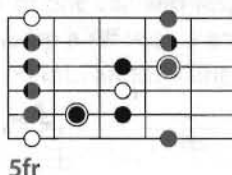
Some of you may be saying to yourself, "This is easy." I sure hope so! Writing out lines like this is just the beginning. Improvising lines at a concert or a gig that come out sounding good every time is another story! How many times have you said to yourself, "I'm running out of ideas?" This lesson will hopefully awaken a new concept for you to explore as you discover more and more ideas.

THE MYSTERY OF GREAT CALL AND RESPONSE

Ravi Shankar would play some intricate run on the sitar, then Allah Raka would answer him on the tablas. John McLaughlin would play a fast run on the guitar and Jerry Goodman would follow it up on the violin. They wouldn't try and copy each other note for note all the time, but would instead answer to the call of the first melody by trying to complement it with another melody that makes musical sense. Is there a rule for what makes sense? No one really knows. Is it just a matter of taste? Not everyone may like it. So trust your own sensibilities and come up with lines that *you* like. We have to believe there is an audience for what we are trying to achieve and forge ahead.

LESSON #85: THE BLUES SCALE

When you add an E \flat (or \flat 5) note to the A minor pentatonic scale, you get the blues scale. The \flat 5 note is an eerie kind of sound, but it can be played against any chord—major or minor. Here is the most common position of the A blues scale, so you can get its sound under your fingers. As you can see, they look an awful lot like the minor pentatonic scale, with just that \flat 5th note added:



Licks

Here are some ideas using the A minor pentatonic scale with the added \flat 5 note—the blues scale.

LICK 1

TRACK 35

0:00

CD 2

Moderately slow

TAB

7 5 7 5 8 7 5 7 6 7 5 6 5 3

LICK 2

TRACK 35

0:09

CD 2

Moderately slow

TAB

5 5 3 5 3 5 6 2 6 5 3 6 7 5 5 5 7

ANY NOTE WORKS

The \flat 5th note may seem like a strange note, but in actuality *every* note on the fretboard can be used in playing the blues. There isn't a rule that says you can't do it! The problem is being tasteful and making all the notes sound good. You have to experiment and discover ways to use the notes in lines you develop. For instance, when we play a minor blues over minor chords, they say you're only supposed to use minor scales. But you can still use the major 3rd note as a passing tone and it sounds fine in that role.

LICK 3

TRACK 35

0:19

CD 2

Moderately

TAB

10 8 10 10 11 10 10 8 10 10 11 10 10 8 10 10

LICK 4

TRACK 35

0:27

Moderately

LESSON #86: THE MIXOLYDIAN MODE

The Mixolydian mode is a major scale with a $\flat 7$ th instead of the natural or major 7th. This is a common sound in country and jazz. It can be used in the blues too, and Eric Johnson and Jeff Beck are the first players this sound reminds me of.

Learning the Scale

When a student asks me about jazzing up the blues, this is the first scale I would show them to get a more sophisticated sound. With the pentatonic scale, you don't have any semitone (one fret) intervals. Every note is either two or three frets apart. With the Mixolydian mode, you have some semitones, which lend themselves to runs, arpeggios, and half-step bending. This gives you another angle on viewing melody creation. When we see patterns on the fretboard, we have to relate those shapes to our fingers. All this lends itself to more possibilities in writing or playing riffs that our fingers are capable of handling.

Here is the A Mixolydian mode in two octaves:

 **TRACK 36**
0:00

CD 2 Moderately fast




Licks

So now let's try using these new notes in some licks while still making it sound like the blues. Most of the time it's a matter of feel (we don't want it to sound too much like country or something other than blues!).

LICK 1

 **TRACK 36**
0:07

CD 2 Moderately fast



LICK 2

 **TRACK 36**
0:13

CD 2 Moderately



LICK 3

TRACK 36
0:21

Moderately



A MODE FOR MANY STYLES

The Mixolydian mode is great in blues, and it's also great in many other styles—even popular music. For instance, it reminds me of the Beatles' music quite a bit, and George Harrison used to write beautiful lines using this scale. John Lennon would complain that they were a commercial band and didn't rock hard enough, but I liked some of their blues numbers and tend to disagree. They did some great blues ballads: "Yer Blues," "Oh, Darling," and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" with Eric Clapton.

LICK 4

TRACK 36
0:27

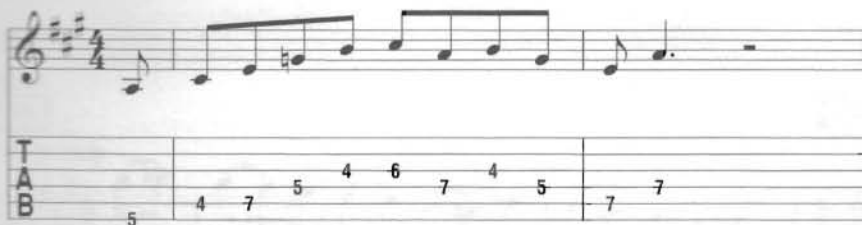
Moderately fast



LICK 5

TRACK 36
0:35

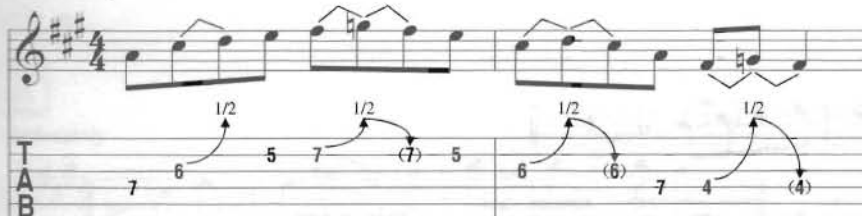
Moderately



LICK 6

TRACK 36
0:41

Moderately



The Mixolydian mode may sound a little Middle Eastern for blues purists, but lots of players use it. I love the way Larry Carlton mixes his style with pentatonics and the Mixolydian mode. Go check out his playing to hear more cool licks that use the Mixolydian sound.

LESSON #87: THE DORIAN MODE

The Dorian mode is the major scale with a lowered 3rd and 7th (the $\flat 3$ rd and $\flat 7$ th), which gives the scale degrees of 1–2– $\flat 3$ –4–5– $\flat 6$ – $\flat 7$. It's a minor sounding scale, because of the $\flat 3$ rd and $\flat 7$ th degrees, but the $\sharp 6$ th degree gives it a brighter sound than the natural minor scale.

The first guitarist that comes to mind in regards to this melodic blues sound is Carlos Santana, especially on tunes like "Chill Out" and "The Healer." Another bloke who plays a melodic style of blues with this scale is Peter Frampton. If you go back to the days when he was in Humble Pie with Steve Marriott you can hear his blues-based style with this Dorian mode sound weaving in and out. Gary Moore also did a lot of work using this particular mode. Toward the end of his career, he was playing a lot of blues and did some concerts alongside some of his blues idols. What a lucky guy!

Learning the Dorian Mode

The A Dorian mode shares the same notes as the G major scale, you just begin the scale on the A note. Here's a two-octave A Dorian scale.



CD 2 Moderately

Licks

Once you have the Dorian mode under your fingers and the sound in your ears, try some licks that use the Dorian mode, like the following ones.

LICK 1



CD 2 Moderately

LICK 2



CD 2 Moderately

LICK 3

TRACK 37
0:22

Moderately

MY MUSICAL INSPIRATION

People often ask me when I got started or interested in music. When I was 14, my parents took me on a road trip to San Francisco and treated me to a night of music at the Fillmore West. On the bill was Steppenwolf, Santana, and It's a Beautiful Day. I knew about Steppenwolf, because a lot of their songs were already hits on the radio. John Kay, Steppenwolf's leader, was absolutely fantastic and to my surprise was an excellent slide guitarist. It's a Beautiful Day played "White Bird," which later became a big hit. I had never heard of Santana, but I was totally blown away by their Latin rock. They had these long jams that seemed to go on forever, but the intensity never let up for a second. What was fantastic about being there during the early stages of Santana's career was the belief he had in himself and his band. The stage was gushing with raw energy! When I got back to Los Angeles, I raved about this Latin band I had seen in San Francisco and it seemed like within a few days I had their first record in my hands. For me, it just seemed like such a natural thing to play music and aspire to be a musician. When you get hit by the bug as hard as I got hit, there's no questioning it!

LICK 4

TRACK 37
0:29

Moderately

LICK 5

TRACK 37
0:38

Moderately

LICK 6

TRACK 37
0:45

Moderately

LESSON #88: DIMINISHED ARPEGGIOS

The diminished sound is normally outside the radar of most blues players. It would be kind to allow only jazz and classical musicians to have access to this cool tricky scale, but it really sounds great if you use it in the right way during a blues solo. Normally we think of the diminished sound as a transition linking the scale tones of the key you're in. In other words, you fit it in-between the particular scale of the key. I use the term "resolution" all the time and, in the case of the diminished scale, you have to be firmly committed to resolving it nicely.

What It Is

The diminished arpeggio is an arpeggio of a diminished seventh chord, which include the root, ♭3rd, diminished 5th, and diminished 7th (which is essentially three minor 3rds stacked on top of each other). Here's your basic two-octave diminished arpeggio in the key of A.

TRACK 38
0:00

CD 2 Moderately

TAB
5 8 6 9 7 10 8 11 10 13 11 14

Licks

LICK 1

Part of this first example is in A minor pentatonic and the other uses the A diminished arpeggio. The idea is to resolve the sound back and forth (or in and out of the primary scale of the key).

TRACK 38
0:07

CD 2 Moderately

diminished arpeggio

TAB
7 5 7 5 7 4 7 5 8 7 10 8 11 10 8 10

LICK 2

I like to smooth the diminished sound by adding all the colorations, like the hammer-ons, pull-offs, and slides found in the following lick. It's the perfect mood-setting tone for a song that's about love-lost relationships.

TRACK 38
0:14

CD 2 Moderately

diminished arpeggio

TAB
5 8 5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7 4 7 5 8 5 8 7 5 4 7

LICK 3

TRACK 38
0:23

Moderately



diminished arpeggio -----

TAB: 5 8 5 7 5 4 5 7 4 6 7 5 5 7

LICK 4

TRACK 38
0:30

Moderately



diminished arpeggio -----

TAB: 7 10 7 9 10 7 10 7 9 7 10 9 7 6 9 8 6 8 5

USE THE DIMINISHED SOUND SPARINGLY

In the past I've been blamed for using odd scales too much during the periods when I was practicing them a lot at home. Let's just say the night before a gig I was working hard on my diminished runs and the next day at the club I played them way too much. A friend in the crowd might come up to me and say, "Being able to play all that diminished stuff isn't what being good is all about." It's a sound that everyone can get tired of pretty quickly, so learn how to shift quickly in and out of your diminished sound.

LICK 5

TRACK 38
0:37

Moderately slow



diminished arpeggio -----

TAB: 5 5 8 5 5 8 10 7 9 10 7 9 6 10 7

LICK 6

TRACK 38
0:45

Moderately



diminished arpeggio -----

TAB: 11 8 10 11 8 5 7 8 5 3 5 5 3 5 3 5 2

TRAIN YOUR EARS TO HEAR THE DIMINISHED ARPEGGIO

At my first formal jazz lesson, Tito at West L.A. Music taught me about the diminished arpeggio and said I needed to get used to hearing something different besides the basic major scale. Think about what we are taught to sing when we're in kindergarten—songs like "Mary Had a Little Lamb." They're all in a major key. We don't sing any songs that are based on the diminished scale. Our ears need to be trained to hear this outside-the-box stuff. But once we get it settled, it can become some of your favorite moments in a solo or piece.

LESSON #89: AUGMENTED ARPEGGIOS

The augmented arpeggio consists of the root, 3rd and augmented 5th ($\sharp 5$), and is a common sound that has its place in the blues. I hear it most commonly used in '50s rockabilly ballads when a song hesitates on the V chord. In the key of A, that would be an E augmented (E \sharp) chord. In this lesson, instead of strumming the chord, we are going to arpeggiate it by playing one note at a time to put it to melodic use.

Like any strange sound, we don't want to overuse it. Just give the listener a glimmer, and move on to stronger harmony. Like the diminished sound, we just insert the new sound in between the other qualified notes of the key. You can slide it between major or minor scales and still get a nice augmented effect.

What It Is

To augment something in music means to move it up one fret. We call a chord augmented when we've moved the 5th tone of the triad up a half step (one fret) to the $\sharp 5$ th.

The augmented chord (and arpeggio) is a symmetrical chord—meaning that the intervals are all the same (they're all major 3rds). Because these stacked major 3rds divide an octave equally, it makes it easier than other harmonies for learning and memorizing augmented triads or arpeggios, because they repeat all over the fretboard. Here, I've stacked the augmented notes of the E \sharp chord to illustrate. Notice how the shapes are all four frets apart. In the following licks, we'll be arpeggiating augmented chords, instead of playing them as chords, like we are here.



Very slow

	0	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32
T	1	4	7	10	13	16	19	22	25
A	2	5	8	11	14	17	20	23	26
B	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27

Licks

Here are some examples in the key of A. See if it reminds you of '50s rock music or perhaps some other era.

LICK 1



Moderately

	10	13	10	12	11	10	11	9	10	9	10
T											
A											
B											

LICK 2



Moderately fast

	10	8	10	8	10	8	9	5	9	5	6	5	6	7	6	5	3	5
T																		
A																		
B																		

LICK 3

TRACK 28
0:33

Moderately

augmented arpeggio -1

LICK 4

TRACK 29
0:39

Moderately

augmented arpeggio --1

LICK 5

TRACK 30
0:47

Moderately

augmented arpeggio

LICK 6

TRACK 31
0:57

Moderately

augmented arpeggio -1 augmented arpeggio -1 augmented arpeggio -1

I didn't always use these dissonant sounds. It wasn't until I learned a bit about jazz that I discovered more options for melody. To me, being able to inject the music with new sounds is the only way for the music to grow and expand. Most of our greatest musicians will tell you they're always practicing and trying to improve. Once you start playing well, you should always be willing to share ideas or teach whatever you know. People may be afraid of other musicians becoming better than they are, but the truth is by sharing we empty our minds to make room for new ideas.

LESSON #90: CHORD INSERTS

One of my favorite things to do is insert a chord into a line. Usually we think of chords as a form of accompaniment—the backup for a song. But here we are using the chords to fortify the line as part of the melody. It really puts the stamp on your melodic and harmonic intention, giving the melody backbone.

I picked this up from listening to jazz piano players do it all the time, but Joe Pass and Barney Kessel were good at this on the guitar, too. You have to work on learning chord voicings, but the cool thing is you only need to focus on one group: dominant seventh chords, and all of their extensions and modifications. Learn as many 7, 9, 11, 13, and 7#9 chords as you can stomach! I like four-note chords, because you can systematically insert them up and down the neck of the guitar.

Licks

Here are ten examples in the key of A. Strum through the chord with the pick or use your thumb and fingers. All of these licks are shown over A chords without any open strings, so each line is entirely moveable. That means that you can move everything up five frets for a D chord and seven frets for an E. Once you know the A, D, and E dominant chords, try it out with 6th chords. Then, implant these chords whenever you want to build or accentuate a line. This will also lead you toward becoming a good solo guitarist who can play gigs on your own. People love to hear an acoustic or electric guitar that has a full, complete sound.

LICK 1

TRACK 40

0:00

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = ♩)

LICK 2

Slowly (♩ = ♩)

LICK 3

TRACK 40

0:13

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = ♩)

LICK 4

Slowly (♩ = ♩)

LICK 5

TRACK 40

0:23

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = ♩)

LICK 6

Slowly (♩ = ♩)

LICK 7

TRACK 40

0:36

Slowly

A6 A7

3 7 10 12 14 15

12 14 12 14

11 11 11 14

MUSICIANS ARE ALWAYS GROWING

Maybe you thought the blues guitar was a simple study and there wasn't much to it? I had an old friend in Busselton, West Australia named Les. He was a retired British guy that studied and taught classical piano in England, but settled down in Australia and continued to teach music. He used to say things like, "I wish musicians were the politicians of the world. Everything would be about peace and the arts." But he would also drop bombs by saying things like, "Doctors who study to become surgeons after ten years kick back and collect huge sums of money and never try and better themselves once they start their lucrative practice. But we musicians have to continue to study and aspire our entire lives because that's the nature of the thing. Without that you're a boring musician without the ability to inspire others." That's a little heavy, Les! And while it's not true about all surgeons, it's always wonderful to feel a positive uplift from the music. Try and have fun while you continue to practice. A lifetime of working at the blues is a good thing. (Les was in his eighties at the time.)

LICK 8

TRACK 40

0:45

Slowly

A13 A11 A9 A7 A9 A11 A7 A9 A7

w/ pick & fingers

14 12 15 14 12 10 8 7 5 3 2 6 4 2

12 12 12 9 9 6 5 4 0 2 5 5 4 2

11 14 11 10 5 5 4 0 4 5 5 4 3

LICK 9

TRACK 40

1:02

Slowly (♩ = ♪)

A

3 2 4 2 4 2 4

5 3 4 2 5 2 4 2 4

LICK 10

TRACK 40

1:09

Moderately slow

A7#9

A9

5 6 7 5 8 5 5 7 5 7 5 4 5

8 6 7 5 5 7 5 7 5 4 5

LESSON #91: PEDALING

With a title that sounds like “peddling,” it might seem like I’m trying to sell something—music! Pedaling means to keep one note going or repeating over and over. In these examples, we’re pedaling notes alongside a riff. The players that come to mind that do this often are George Benson and Stevie Ray Vaughan. You can add any note from the key that you are in and play it at the same time you’re playing a riff. It’s a nice effect that fattens the sound and almost makes you think you’re hearing counterpoint (which is two melodies happening simultaneously).

Licks

When I first started listening to records and trying to figure out what guitarists were doing, this sound baffled me, but I’ve always liked sounds coming out of the guitar that seemed strange or difficult to play. You can play the extra notes with a pick and your fingers (hybrid picking), or use your thumb and fingers. I don’t think these are too hard to play, but they do make it *sound* like there could be a lot more going on than just one note added to a line.

LICK 1

In this first example we are pedaling the root note (A) on top of an A blues riff. Barre across the 5th fret with your index finger. You can also pedal the 5th (E) which is under your barred index finger at the 5th fret of string 2 (which you may hear throughout some of this lick on the audio, as well.)

TRACK 41
0:00

CD 2 Moderately

w/ pick & fingers

TAB: 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 (riff), 7 5 7 7 8 7 5 7 7 (pedal)

LICK 2

Lick 2 pedals on the A root note on top of a Mixolydian blues riff.

TRACK 41
0:06

CD 2 Moderately

w/ pick & fingers

TAB: 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 (riff), 5 7 5 8 7 5 7 5 6 (pedal)

Lick 3 plays an A riff in the second position. Play the pedal tone on the 5th fret with your pinky. Lick 4 pedals the 5th of the scale instead of the root. As I mentioned earlier, you can use any other note from the scale, even though it’s the same riff. And Lick 5 uses the 6th tone of the scale over the same riff. Think of the possibilities in choosing notes to pedal over any riff you already know!

LICK 3

TRACK 41
0:12

CD 2 Moderately slow

w/ pick & fingers

TAB: 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 (riff), 2 4 2 4 5 4 2 (pedal)

LICK 4

Moderately slow

w/ pick & fingers

TAB: 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 (riff), 2 4 2 4 5 4 2 (pedal)

LICK 5

Moderately slow

w/ pick & fingers

TAB: 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 (riff), 2 4 2 4 5 4 2 (pedal)

LESSON #92: SLIDE SHOW

B.B. King's slide-blast is probably the most well-known and copied technique out there. B.B. slashes through the strings with his pick held firmly in his right hand while muting all but one string with the left hand. The effect is a loud explosion with a one-note trailer sounding like a siren peeling off and winding down.

How to Do It

You can achieve this "slide show" by using your little finger while the rest of the fingers of the fretting hand rest on the strings to mute them. (You can try other fingers, but for me the little finger is the easiest.) After you strike the strings, only the note your little finger is pressing down will sound, and then you immediately slide your little finger down the fretboard without lifting it off. Be sure to keep pressing down on the string!

EXERCISE 1

Here, I've picked a few different notes you can practice this with.

TRACK 42
0:00

CD 2 Moderately

steady gliss. steady gliss. steady gliss. steady gliss.

TAB 20 17 12 13

EXERCISE 2

You can do this with two notes at a time, too. The barred 4th interval with the index or first finger is a common sound. Since the last of these 4ths uses notes on different frets, it needs to be fingered with two fingers. You can't barre it.

TRACK 42
0:13

CD 2 Moderately

steady gliss. steady gliss. steady gliss. steady gliss.

TAB 20 17 17 12 12 13 13 12

EXERCISE 3

We can also capitalize on this technique with chords. I've chosen C7 and Am7 (which also sounds like a C major triad in this voicing). Using three-note chords is a nifty sound to inject into the middle of your solos.

TRACK 42
0:24

CD 2 Moderately

steady gliss. steady gliss.

TAB 12 13 12 17 17 17

The “Whipsnake”

Though a number of players use this in their playing, Albert Collins would have to win the prize for the most explosive result. These slides sound like a missile going over your head at a million miles an hour! It can also sound like a whip, which is why I call it a “whipsnake.” It’s comprised of a fast slide going up and then reversing back down. The secret is to be moving your left hand while you strike the strings (it took me a long time to figure this out!). In other words, don’t strum the strings while you’re holding the chord and then slide the notes. Instead, start sliding *right at the moment* you strike the strings. Try and copy the sound on the CD.

EXERCISE 4

TRACK 42

0:31

Very fast

Am7

EXERCISE 5

TRACK 42

0:34

Very fast

Gm

EXERCISE 6

TRACK 42

0:37

Very fast

G13

D13

I think I got the inspiration for this next example from the Eric Johnson CD *Tones*. You can take a bass note and slide it up to a specific position and then slide back on a higher note on another string.

EXERCISE 7

TRACK 42

0:39

Very fast

This concept is something that you should run with. Pick any two strings and practice sliding up on one string and down on another with the “whipsnake” technique. Also try just using the low E string by itself. That’s how you get the Anaconda “whipsnake” sound. Boom! Boom!

LESSON #93: HAMMERED CHORDS

I love hearing textures and interesting colors by guitarists when they're in a backup or rhythm role. Jimi Hendrix and Michael Bloomfield were exceptional rhythm guitarists when they played behind other musicians, and they were equally good at backing up themselves when they were singing. These hammered chord ideas are an attempt to make the rhythm part more interesting while also giving you some insight into how you can decorate the chords. There are a few slides here and there, but mostly this lesson implements hammer-ons in conjunction with dominant chords.

Examples

Here are some examples of how you can embellish your chords via hammer-ons. Don't forget that you can use each example to fill out a 12-bar blues by moving the chords up five frets for the D chord and up seven frets for the E chord.

EXAMPLE 1

TRACK 43
0:00

CD 2

Moderately

A13

EXAMPLE 2

Moderately

A13

EXAMPLE 3

TRACK 43
0:17

CD 2

Moderately

A7

EXAMPLE 4

Moderately

A9

EXAMPLE 5

TRACK 43
0:32

CD 2

Moderately

A9

EXAMPLE 6

Moderately

A7

Example 7 is a first-position A7 using open strings. This voicing gets used a lot. Example 8 uses the same voicing as Example 7, but this time it's for the D7 up at the 5th fret. To play this, you need to barre the chord with your index finger.

EXAMPLE 7

TRACK 43
0:47

Moderately

A7

EXAMPLE 8

Moderately

D7

Example 9 features another common sound in the blues: the 9th chord. Tamper with all the chords you know to make it more interesting to listen to! Example 10 includes another common chord voicing of E7. But by moving notes throughout the chord it's beginning to have a new life. At least it sounds like it to me.

EXAMPLE 9

TRACK 43
1:33

Moderately

A9

EXAMPLE 10

Moderately

E7

YOU CAN'T SOLO FOREVER

I used to rehearse and have jam sessions after hours at a little music shop I opened in Busselton, West Australia. I would invite people to play and we would go for it for hours until we were exhausted. One time there was this really nice local guy that was truly a gentleman. He was really into the guitar, but hadn't played with other people very much, so I invited him to jam and he got very excited. On the day of the jam he brought all his equipment. He had a nice Les Paul and a beautiful Fender amp. He looked like a pro sitting over there across the room from me! We tuned up our guitars and decided we would start with a little blues jam, and of course I let him take the first solo. Everything went OK (though you could tell he was a bit nervous). He was actually a pretty good musician and I was happy to be there with him watching him play his blues licks with some good solid backing. But after he'd been soloing for a few minutes, it became apparent that something was up; he was so into what he was doing, combined with a truly heightened nervous state, he couldn't stop himself from playing! I can't remember how we got him to quit playing, but anyhow it was a great spectacle, and I was kind of happy to just be there as a witness.

The point of the story is that you need to have a plan B when it's not your turn to solo. You can't just keep soloing until the band goes home! Be good at being a rhythm guitarist as well, so you're fun to be around if you want to get into a band.

LESSON #94: PULLED CHORDS

In this lesson we're using pull-offs to embellish our chords. This technique requires a lot of hand strength, so it helps to use an electric guitar that's been set up with a lower action. I found this out the hard way, myself. Once I went to education guru Ted Greene for a lesson, and at the time I was really into the acoustic guitar. I mentioned I'd been practicing jazz chords on my Guild D55 steel-string, and he cringed. He handed me his guitar and the action was really low, and that's what made it possible for him to play his amazing chords. I'm not saying you can't do it on an acoustic, but it's much easier on an electric that's been set up!

Examples

These examples are all in the key of A, so make sure you move these around into different positions (different chords) to fully take advantage of this knowledge. You really limit yourself by not developing familiarity with other chords and keys.

EXAMPLE 1

TRACK 44
0:00

CD 2

Moderately

EXAMPLE 2

Moderately

EXAMPLE 3

TRACK 44
0:13

CD 2

Moderately

EXAMPLE 4

Moderately

EXAMPLE 5

TRACK 44
0:26

CD 2

Moderately

CHORD EMBELLISHMENTS ENHANCE YOUR RHYTHM

Chord embellishments like these open up more possibilities for your rhythm playing, making a whole new world of creative guitar accompaniment available to you, which makes playing your instrument way more exciting! I've had the honor of backing up great soul singers like Deniece Williams and Thelma Jones and working in nice chords behind their voices was incredibly fun. For some tasteful rhythm guitar listening, check out a cat named Sugar from the Ohio Players group. It's not the blues but great commercial soul music, especially the ballads that always seem to have excellent guitar rhythms.

EXAMPLE 6

TRACK 44

0:33

Moderately

EXAMPLE 7

TRACK 44

0:41

Moderately

EXAMPLE 8

TRACK 44

0:48

Moderately

There are a number of ways to use this lesson, but the best way to take advantage of this technique would be to practice it so much that it becomes easy to play. Spend a lot of time listening to the rhythm guitar parts on recordings, and even try listening to what piano players are doing with chords. In the beginning, chords can sound like a wash of notes that you're unable to pick out. Gradually, you will be able to hear each individual note within the chord and then you'll be able to move the different notes and create beautiful sounds.

LESSON #95:

HALF-STEP CHORD WORKOUT

When you hear a row of chords in a passage, you might ask yourself, "Where did all those chords come from and why do they work?" In both blues and jazz, many of those passages use a lot of half-step chord maneuvers. The trick here is that these half-step chord motions are used to resolve from one chord to another, and this whole lesson is about just that: one chord quickly resolves into another over and over again using these half-step chord maneuvers. This may lead you to a new way of perceiving and working with chords.

Examples

These examples are all in the key of A. The G# chords are a half step below the A chords and the Bb chords are a half step above. Both the G# and Bb chords are resolving into the A chords, just from different directions. Make sure you practice this concept by resolving to D and E chords as well (not just A chords). This will give you ample chords to fill a 12-bar blues. (Hint: you'll need Db and Eb chords to resolve to the D chords, and Eb and F chords to resolve to the E chords.)

Musicians can do these randomly during any blues song. As long as you resolve your sounds into the key, you can work these half-step chords into a song.

EXAMPLE 1

TRACK 45
0:00

CD 2

G#9 A9 G#7 A9

T	3	4	5	6
A	1	2	4	5
B	3	4	3	5

EXAMPLE 2

G#7 A7 G#9 A9

T	4	5	4	5
A	1	2	3	4
B	3	4	3	4

EXAMPLE 3

TRACK 45
0:24

CD 2

G#13 A13 G#7 A7

T	6	7	7	8
A	5	6	5	6
B	4	5	4	5

EXAMPLE 4

G#9 A9 G#13 A13

T	4	5	6	7
A	4	5	6	7
B	4	5	6	7

NEIGHBOR TONES AND CHORDS

Chords and notes that are a half step (one fret) above and below any note or chord are known as neighbors (or neighboring notes and chords).

EXAMPLE 5

TRACK 45
0:46

CD 2

G#7 A7 G#7sus4 A7sus4

T	8	9	9	10
A	7	8	7	8
B	6	7	6	7

EXAMPLE 6

G#7 A7 G#13 A13

T	11	12	13	14
A	9	10	11	12
B	11	12	11	12

EXAMPLE 7

TRACK 45

1:08

G#7 A7 G#9 A9

	G#7	A7	G#9	A9
T	14	15	16	17
A	13	14	15	16
B	13	14	15	17

EXAMPLE 8

G#9 A9 Bb13 A13

	G#9	A9	Bb13	A13
T	18	19	20	19
A	16	17	19	19
B	16	17	18	17

EXAMPLE 9

TRACK 45

1:31

Bb9 A9 Bb9 A9

	Bb9	A9	Bb9	A9
T	18	17	16	15
A	15	14	15	14
B	17	16	17	16

EXAMPLE 10

Bb9 A9 Bb9 A9

	Bb9	A9	Bb9	A9
T	13	12	10	9
A	13	12	10	9
B	12	11	10	9

EXAMPLE 11

TRACK 45

1:53

Bb9 A9 Bb13 A13

	Bb9	A9	Bb13	A13
T	8	7	6	5
A	6	5	6	5
B	6	5	6	5

EXAMPLE 12

Bb9 A9 Bb7 A7

	Bb9	A9	Bb7	A7
T	4	3	6	5
A	3	2	7	5
B	3	2	6	5

EXAMPLE 13

TRACK 45

2:15

Bb9 A9 Bb9 A9

	Bb9	A9	Bb9	A9
T	3	2	3	4
A	3	2	3	4
B	X	X	3	4

EXAMPLE 14

Bb7 A7 Bb7 A7

	Bb7	A7	Bb7	A7
T	3	2	3	2
A	3	2	3	2
B	3	4	3	3

Listen to "Stormy Monday," perhaps the most popular blues song in history, to hear these types of half-step chord changes taking place. You can use this approach to your heart's content. It seems like both jazz and blues players might even use this line of thinking more than anything else.

LESSON #96: OPEN-STRING LICKS IN E

It seems the more open strings we use in our playing, the more traditional we sound as blues guitarists. The early bluesmen didn't have modern electric guitars with light strings, accurate intonation, and access to notes way up past the 12th fret, so flying all over the neck and never coming down to the open strings sort of cuts you off from the early roots of the music. Another cool thing about down at the nut of your guitar is that you get close interval sounds with the open strings sustaining while you play notes on another string. This gives the style a fuller sound which, though it leans towards solo guitar playing, it's great for lead lines. Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix did loads of riffs incorporating open strings.

Licks

These examples are all in the key of E. The low E bass string is constantly heard under E and E7 chords in the blues when people play in standard tuning.

LICK 1

TRACK 46
0:00

CD 2

Very slow (♩ = ♪♪)

Musical notation for Lick 1 in E major, 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: E4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). The bass clef staff shows the fretting: 2 4 3 0 3 4 2 0 2 0 1 3.

LICK 2

TRACK 48
0:12

CD 2

Slowly

Musical notation for Lick 2 in E major, 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: E4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). The bass clef staff shows the fretting: 0 0 0 2 0 2 0 1 2 0.

LICK 3

TRACK 48
0:22

CD 2

Slowly (♩ = ♪♪)

Musical notation for Lick 3 in E major, 4/4 time. The treble clef staff shows a sequence of notes: E4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G#4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half). The bass clef staff shows the fretting: 0 3 0 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 0 5.

LICK 4

This was inspired by Stevie Ray Vaughan.

TRACK 46

0:31

Slowly

LICK 5

Lick 5 uses more SRV-type open-string lead playing.

TRACK 46

0:44

Fast

LICK 6

This lick feels like an exercise, but if you learn to play it fast, it can be a flashy, usable line.

TRACK 46

0:49

Moderately

LICK 7

This is another Hendrix/SRV-type line. These are tricky to play fast. Squeezing out the bends in a fast line takes a tremendous amount of effort. The word "effort" is the key to everything in the blues!

TRACK 46

0:56

Moderately slow

Stevie Ray Vaughan's instrumental "Scuttle Buttin'" is a lightning-fast tune that presents a challenge to anybody wanting to learn it. I never really figured it out note-for-note because it was so darn fast! When you start working open strings into your playing, you can get some real fast hammer-ons and pull-offs going, just like SRV's "Scuttle Buttin'."

Perhaps the king of the open string was Albert Collins. He went so far as to always use a capo so he could keep using open strings in his playing in any key!

LESSON #97:

OPEN-STRING LICKS IN A

Let's look at some licks in the key of A using the open-string concept. The key of A is a great key for open-string licks, since all the open strings are usable in an A blues. Again, we'll stick to the nut of our guitar, where we can really take advantage of the intervals of these open strings.

Licks

A lot of these open-string licks in A lean a bit toward the rock side of things, but I sometimes like to finish a blues solo with a flurry of quickly hammered (or pulled) low notes. It provides a flashy signature for you to establish your presence! For instance, you might play some slow melodic lines to cultivate a mellow sound, then suddenly throw in a speedy open-stringed run to impress people with your technique. But this is just *one* approach; it's not imperative that you follow it. However, it's good to have a conceptual framework for your solos to keep them from getting too crazy!

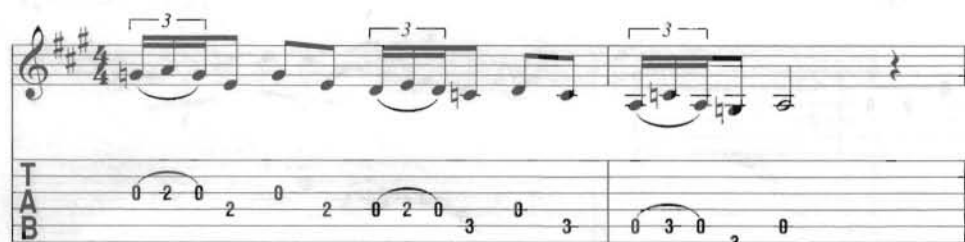
LICK 1

TRACK 47

0:00

CD 2

Moderately



Musical notation for Lick 1, featuring a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with three triplets indicated by a '3' over a bracket. The tablature below shows fingerings: 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 3.

LICK 2

TRACK 47

0:08

CD 2

Moderately



Musical notation for Lick 2, featuring a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a triplet indicated by a '3' over a bracket. The tablature below shows fingerings: 3 1 2 1 3 1 2 1 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 2 0 3 0 2 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 0.

LICK 3

TRACK 47

0:16

CD 2

Moderately



Musical notation for Lick 3, featuring a treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with a triplet indicated by a '3' over a bracket. The tablature below shows fingerings: 2 0 5 2 0 5 2 0 5 2 0 5 3 0 5.

LICK 4

This lick uses some sliding 6ths intervals, which are very effective in the blues.

TRACK 47

0:22

Moderately slow

w/ pick & fingers

let ring -----

LICK 5

The hammer-on from the 4th to the 5th followed by a slide to the $b5$ (or $\sharp 11$) is another common bluesy sound that can spice up your playing.

TRACK 47

0:30

Moderately fast

LICK 6

Try using Lick 6 for the hard-hitting part of the solo!

TRACK 47

0:38

Very fast

BLUESY ALTER EGO

When I'm having a good night and the crowd seems to be enjoying every note, I sometimes pound an open string and just let it sustain. Then I turn to someone in the audience and stare em' down. With all that hypnotic noise going on, you can look around the room and psych people out. Nobody fools with a mad blues guitarist who's on the edge! I've also been able to get the bouncers to throw people out by playing with a certain whacky attitude.

For me, the whole blues game is like acting in a movie. You definitely have to develop and polish the music. But then, after you've convinced yourself that you are ready, you can begin to act like you're somebody else. You use the blues medium as an excuse to act out your fantasies.

LESSON #98: QUICK REPEATERS

I like to call any repeated lick a repeater, so “quick repeaters” are blindingly fast repeated licks. These may not be too difficult to memorize, but they do take time to get under your fingers at a performance tempo. To be able to play these fast without thinking about it, you have to set up a routine practice program and keep at it until you get the results! These need to get so deeply ingrained into your fingers that they’re second nature—like riding a bike. It might take a while, but it’s definitely worth it!


Alvin Lee from the band Ten Years After milked this repetitive stuff to the hilt. The first time I heard him play, I thought to myself, “That’s impossible!” I also think Jimmy Page’s lines on the Led Zeppelin tune “Dazed and Confused” are some of the most tastefully displayed recycling of a repetitive riff you can hear.

Licks

What’s interesting about this concept is you can keep the lick going for as long as you want over all the chord changes. You don’t have to stop the cycling when the chord changes. This is the same idea as pedaling, but instead of pedaling one note, we’re using a cluster of notes.

LICK 1

This first lick was inspired by Alvin Lee.

 **TRACK 48**
0:00

CD 2 **Slowly**

LICK 4

In my book *Guitar Workout* (Hal Leonard), we cover a picking technique called the “mini sweep” (which is a mini version of sweep picking—a technique where you sweep the pick across the strings to pick multiple strings in one motion). To play this next lick fast, we need to develop our mini sweep. I’ve provided you with the picking sequence. It feels awkward at first for most people, so stick with it!

TRACK 48

0:31

CD 2

Moderately slow

LICK 5

This is a jazzy sounding horn line that works great for the blues.

TRACK 48

0:41

CD 2

Moderately

LICK 6

This is the first repeater I ever learned. It was taught to me by Lawrence Ferrara, a great blues guitarist from my high school who later went on to establish himself as a leading classical guitar educator and performer.

TRACK 48

0:49

CD 2

Moderately slow

LICK 7

This is the most famous riff I can think of. It’s another Jimmy Page lick. (He is so good at this sort of thing!)

TRACK 48

0:58

CD 2

Moderately fast

MY FAVORITE “REPEATER” HIGHLIGHT

I think the most amazing blues show I ever witnessed was by Albert Collins. It was at the Perth Concert Hall in West Australia. Albert had a cord that was at least 100 feet long and he strolled down the aisles while everyone in the audience helped him with his cord! The apex of the night was when he sat down in the back of the theater and started playing a whacky repeater lick. It seemed like it went on forever! While he was doing this, he had his feet kicked up on the row of seats in front of him. What a picture. He literally annihilated the place with that repeater. People were going crazy!!!

LESSON #99:

CLASSIC ELMORE JAMES STYLE

This lesson is a study of the Elmore James classic style in his epic blues tune "Dust My Broom." It's not a note-for-note rendition of that tune, but it's a great study of this style for anyone who wants know some basic blues rhythm and structuring.

This blues uses a shuffle rhythm, and many students have trouble sitting in the pocket and staying on top of the beat when playing a shuffle. (Dragging behind in the rhythm department is usually a sign that someone hasn't practiced enough!)

This 12-bar blues form in the key of E is a staple for all blues musicians. Start off slowly.



TRACK 48

0:00

CD 2

Moderately slow (♩ = ♪♩)

E

First system of the 12-bar blues form in the key of E. The guitar part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The bass part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The rhythm is a shuffle.

Second system of the 12-bar blues form in the key of E. The guitar part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The bass part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The rhythm is a shuffle.

Third system of the 12-bar blues form in the key of E. The guitar part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The bass part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The rhythm is a shuffle.

Fourth system of the 12-bar blues form in the key of E. The guitar part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The bass part features a series of triplets on the E string (12, 13, 14) and a descending line on the A string (4, 3, 2, 1). The rhythm is a shuffle.

9

B7 A7

3 0 2 2 0 0 2 | 0 0 3 2 2 0 2 0

11

E7 C7 B7

4 3 0 3 2 0 2 1 0 | 0 1 3 2 3 2 2

13

E7

0 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 | 4 0 2 3 0 0 0

*Played as straight (even) eighth notes.

FIND YOUR STYLE OF MUSIC AND FOCUS ON THAT

How many times have I seen new students come in with the idea that being a guitarist must be great, and then they quit the moment they find out it's going to take a lot of work? It can take a lifetime of work to even scratch the surface of just one *style* of music! In order to come anywhere close to professionally good, most people have to specialize in one style. What I'm getting at is your *focus*. Focus on the music you want to play the most and keep that in the forefront of your mind. That singular focus will eventually help you excel in the style you love most.

LESSON #100: 12-BAR DEMO

We've finally arrived at a lesson that demonstrates soloing over an entire 12-bar blues. I can't thank you enough for hanging in there with me!

To learn a solo like the one in this lesson, you have to listen to the music over and over until it's totally ingrained in your head. Try and imitate what's on the CD to the best of your ability. I came up with the content for this piece by using the techniques found throughout the rest of this book. Enjoy!



CD 2

Slowly

12 A7 D7

TAB 2 2 4 2 4 6 2 5 7 5 8 7 5 5 7

3 A7

4 6 2 3 4 2 2 2 4 6 5 5 7

5 D7

3 3 3 5 7 5 5 7 5 9 9 11 10

7

A7

9

E7

D7

11

A7

D7

Dm7

E7

GO INSPIRE OTHERS!

What I'm really hoping for more than anything with all this sharing of information is that one day I'll walk into a club or a concert and someone who studied these lessons is up there on the stage wowing everybody and having a ball doing it. I think back at the times I walked out of a concert after a night of music and was totally inspired by what I'd heard and seen.

There used to be a pilot who had a scheduled route that flew into the local airport near a club I was working at every Sunday. He made a point of coming to my gigs after work and always seemed to really enjoy what we were doing. One day he came up to me during a break and said, "I get so much inspiration from your music you make me want to be a better pilot." Sometimes we don't know how our music is affecting people.

B.B. King said that music brings people together and gives them hope. So let's all get our guitars and go out and bring others hope!

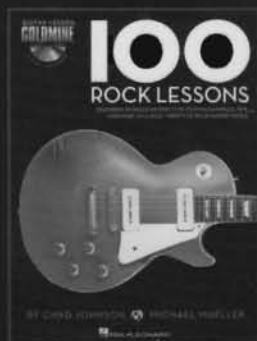
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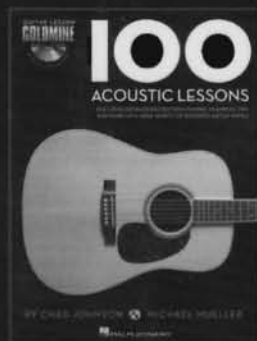
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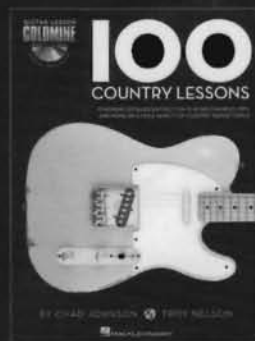
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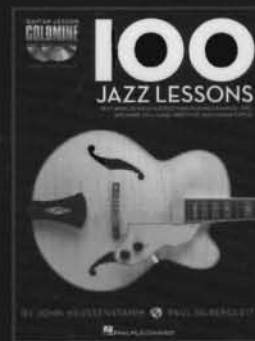
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